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An ESSAY
Towards A
COMPREHENSION,
OR, A
PERSWASIVE
TO
UNITY amongst Protestants.

HUMBLY OFFERED

To the Consideration of the Two Houses of Parliament; and especially of the Most Reverend the Archbishops, the Right Reverend the Bishops, and the rest of the Clergy assembled in Convocation.

Published with the Consent, and at the Charge, of several Ministers and others of both Perswasions.

Be a Lover of Peace and Unity.

Every kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against it self shall not stand, Matth. xii. 25.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another, Galat. v. 15.

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To the Consideration of the Two Houses of Parliament; and especially to the Most Reverend and Right Reverend the Bishops, and the rest of the Clergy assembled in Convocation.

THE PREFACE.

WHen the following Papers were at first drawn up, they were not designed for Publick View; and that they now see the Light, is not owing to any Value the Author puts upon them, but to the Desires of some, who thought they might prove useful for the promoting Unity and Peace in the Church, and to whom, both upon the account of his Esteem for them, and the instances of sincere Friendship he had received from them, he lay under such Obligations as not to be capable of denying their Re-

queſts. What Entertainment they will meet with from an angry and contentious World, the Author is uncertain. They are not deſigned to be the ſubject of Debate, but as a means to procure in ſome meaſure the Reſtoration of our Iſrael's *Peace: And therefore if any ſhall manifeſt a Temper ſo contrary to that recommended by our dear Redeemer, as to endeavour the keeping open the Church's bleeding Wounds, by oppoſing the preſent Undertaking, he will not think himſelf obliged to take notice of their uncharitable Diſpoſition, by turning this, the Deſign whereof is the advancing of our Peace, into a matter of Contention. It is enough that he can approve his Sincerity to the Searcher of Hearts, that it is not any By-End, but the Publick Good, which is his only Aim in Publiſh-*

ing the following Papers; as also, that he has an opportunity of manifesting to the World, that he is not of the number of those who are devoted to a Party, but does both heartily wish, and pray for, the Church's Peace, and the Kingdom's Prosperity, which Two are so inseparably joined together, that whatsoever some may fancy, they are not to be parted. He does not, in the following Discourse, pretend to dictate to his Superiors: He reverences their Wisdom, and with an awful Respect to their Commands submits to their Authority. He only proposes, with a profound Humility, and great Regard to the Authority of our Rulers, what he thinks may be useful to promote our Common Peace and Prosperity; yet in this he does not presume to Direct those who sit at the Helm either

ther in Church or State, what is the proper Province of either as to this matter. It is to be hoped, that all will join hand in hand in the pursuit of a Design which tends so much to the Publick Good as an Union amongst us must certainly do. It is therefore to our Governors in general, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, that this Discourse is addrest.

The Author has been long grieved to see the declining State of Religion and Piety; his Sorrow has been heightned by considering what an occasion is given by our intestine Divisions to the Enemies of Religion to Blaspheme; as also how much the Protestant Interest is weakned by it, and the Popish strengthned. He has long mourn'd to see the Church's Wounds rankle more and more, notwithstanding the healing Oyl which

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many excellent Perſons have poured into them: He ſhould now deſpair of doing any Good after ſo many whoſe Shoes he is not worthy to unloose, have been diſappointed in Attempts of this nature, did he not conſider that the Battel is not to the Strong, nor the Race to the Swift, but that God has the Hearts of all Men in his hand, to make uſe of whom he pleaſeth. Should he fail in the Attempt, it is but what has happen'd to others before him: if he ſhould ſucceed, he will count it the laſting Bleſſing of his Life, that God has made him an Inſtrument, if not in altogether healing, yet at leaſt in ſoftning the Church's Wounds. To conclude, The Cauſe which I do now undertake is not the Cauſe of a Party, but of that Church of which our Bleſſed Lord is the Bridegroom, and God

the Father; to him therefore I commit it. If through his Mercy I succeed, to his Name be the Glory; but if I do not, I shall always pray that wherein I fail another may succeed more happily. If I am mistaken in my Choice of the Expedients proposed for the promoting of Peace and Unity, yet the Excellency of the Design, and the Sincerity of one who declares himself a Lover of all good Men, will atone for it, and procure him an easie pardon at the hands of all Charitable Religious and Peaceable Christians.

Life, that God has made him an Instrument, if not in altogether healing, yet at least in closing the Church's Wounds. To conclude

The Cause which I do now undertake is not the Cause of a Party, but of that Church of which our Blessed Lord is the Bridegroom, and God

AN ESSAY Towards An UNION BY A COMPREHENSION.

AN Union among Protestants professing the same Faith, tho' differing as to some things of less importance, would not only advance the Interest of Religion, but conduce very much to the welfare of the Nation. This many pious Men, both out of a zeal for Religion, and their Country, have a great while earnestly desired. There was a time, when, all Parties being in danger of being overtaken by the common Destruction, there seemed a very great disposition towards it: The Church shewed her self willing to come to some temper; and the Dissenters (if some few things, they judged sinful, might be laid aside) seemed willing to comply with the present Constitution of the Church for Peace sake. Had

this happy Diſpoſition in both Parties continued, or had the Iron been ſtruck, while it had been hot, our Differences had been happily compos'd, and there had not been any neceſſity for this Attempt at preſent. But alas! no ſooner were our Fears blown over by the happy Revolution, and the acceſſion of his Majeſty to the Throne, but the Inclinations of the Contending Parties to an Union abated. It's true, that quickly after the Revolution ſome Attempts were made towards a Comprehenſion; but notwithſtanding the advantages of a Comprehenſion, with a limited Toleration, the Attempt was defeated, and the Deſign blaſted, and all ended in an unlimited Toleration only. This has indeed skinn'd over the Wound, but is far from healing it. The Church now thinks her ſelf able to preſerve her Conſtitution, without a Comprehenſion; and therefore doth not concern her ſelf to do any thing more, than what has been already done, for the Diſſenters. The Diſſenters are eaſie, and do not feel the ſmart of their former Proſecutions, and therefore are contented with the Liberty they now enjoy. Both Parties ſit ſecure, as tho' there were no danger. But is all well? Is nothing more to be done for the good of Religion, and the Intereſt of the Kingdom? Certainly there is; we are not ſo ſecure, as ſome may think us to be; and therefore it is ſtill our Intereſt, to ſtrengthen our ſelves againſt whatever Attempts may be made to ruine our Religion, and deſtroy our Liberties. This an Union among Proteſtants would

would be one effectual means to do: For what tends to the leſſening our Breaches, to the healing our Diviſions, tends alſo to enable us to oppoſe the Attempts our Enemies may make, either to deſtroy the one, or ruine the other. Let us not therefore be averſe to that which will be ſo real a benefit to Religion, and ſo great an advantage to the Kingdom. Did our Dangers once make us inclinable to unite? Let it have the ſame effect upon us now; we are perhaps now in as much danger as ever. We are told from the Preſs, that notwithſtanding all the endeavours uſed to prevent the growth of Popery amongſt us, the Papiſts hope they ſhall get it eſtabliſhed ſtill, and boaſt that there is nothing in the way to the accompliſhment of their deſign, but the Life of his preſent Majeſty; And how much has their hope been heightned by the irreparable loſs of the Duke of *Glouceſter*? It is indeed to be hop'd that their Predictions will prove falſe, and that God, who has hitherto baffled all their Attempts and Deſigns againſt us, will ſtill be the Guardian of *England*, to preſerve us from the Violence of thoſe bloody Men; but yet their Confidence ought to make us watchful againſt them, by taking thoſe prudent Methods, which may be moſt beneficial to us, and diſadvantageous to them. As therefore the noble Attempts of the laſt Parliament to ſecure us againſt them, gave Life to theſe Thoughts; ſo it is to this Court, *the Honour and Safety of the* Engliſh *Nation*, we look for Security ſtill, by their purſuing this

Deſign, which ows its Life and Original to their Zeal for the Security of the Proteſtant Religion among us. We beſeech you, *Men, Brethren and Fathers*, by all that is dear and ſacred to you, either as Lovers of Religion or your Country, conſider how neceſſary it is in this juncture of Affairs, by all means poſſible to twiſt, as much as may be, the differing Intereſts of the Kingdom into one; what an Advantage the effecting this Union will be to the Intereſt of Religion and *England*; how much it will add to the Glory of His Majeſty, to have it accompliſhed in his time; how much it will be the Honour of this Parliament, thereby to heal our Breaches. Will not after Ages, when they remember your Zeal for the Proteſtant Religion, and the Churches Peace, riſe up and call you Bleſſed? When we conſider theſe things, we cannot but hope that thoſe will cheriſh this Deſign, who gave Life to it; and that they will not ſtifle in the Birth, what owes its Conception to them.

There are three things attempted in the following Papers.

1. There are ſome Reaſons offered, to ſhew the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of attempting this Work of healing our Breaches by a Comprehenſion.

2. What may be fairly objected againſt it, is impartially conſidered and diſcuſſed.

3. Some Methods are propoſed, which may, by the bleſſing of God, be uſeful for the effecting this Union. But if in this Part we ſhould ſeem too particular in the Propo-

ſals offered, and thereby to preſume to dictate to our Superiors; we beſeech the Reader to conſider, that we utterly diſclaim any ſuch thing; we only lay down there what, by Converſe with Men and Books, we find is generally excepted againſt by the Diſſenters, and do humbly propoſe what we believe would be moſt ſatisfactory to them. We have indeed added the Reaſons offered by the Church-men for, and by the Diſſenters againſt the things excepted againſt, that by ſetting things in this light, our Superiors, whoſe Wiſdom we admire, and to which we intirely ſubmit, may judge the better of the Deſires of the Diſſenters, whether it be reaſonable to gratifie them in the things they except againſt, or no. There might be many Reaſons urged, to ſhew the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of this Union; but we ſhall confine our ſelves to theſe following.

1. *Now, if ever, is the time of effecting and compaſſing this Union.* It was a current Opinion among ſome of the Ancient Philoſophers, That there is a Golden and Critical Moment in every Man's Life, which if he be wiſe to lay hold on, may be to his benefit and advantage during his abode on this ſide the Grave; but that if he let this ſlip, it might never return any more. To apply this to the Caſe in hand: This ſeems to be the critical time of effecting and bringing about this Union; we have now a King ſitting at the Helm, who is diſpoſed to concur with us in every thing that may be for our good, and whoſe Glory it ſeems to be, That he is the

great Support and Defence (under God) of the Proteſtant Religion; and who therefore, we have reaſon to hope, would concur with the Kingdom, in a matter ſo beneficial to the good thereof, and ſo neceſſary for the promoting and ſtrengthening the Proteſtant Intereſt among us. To this I may alſo add, That as it doth appear by the Law paſſed the laſt Seſſion againſt the Papiſts, that our Supream Court of Legiſlature did then conſiſt of worthy Men, who were concerned for the Intereſt of Religion; whoſe concurrence therefore we had reaſon to expect in ſo good a Work as this; ſo we hope, that the number of theſe worthy Patriots will not be diminiſhed but much increaſed in the approaching Parliament. We have alſo now in the Church a Bright Conſtellation of Stars of the firſt Magnitude, Men of Renown for God, famous in their day for Piety, Learning and Moderation, whoſe Lives are the Tranſcript of the Word they preach, who are in eminent Stations in the Church, and ſo in a capacity to forward and promote an Union. There is now Peace abroad, and therefore Leiſure at home to ſet about it. Can we ever wiſh for a more favourable Conjunction of happy Circumſtances for its effecting, than now there is? This is therefore the moſt favourable Juncture, that can be put into our Hands, for the accompliſhing this great Affair. But if we let this Opportunity ſlip, we know not whether ever we may have another ſuch put into our Hands. And how long this may laſt, we know not; the King's

Breath

Breath is in his Noſtrils, and when He is dead, we know not who may come after. For tho' it is to be hoped, that the preſent Branches of the Royal Family have ſeen ſo much of the miſchief of our preſent and paſt Diviſions, that they would endeavour to compoſe our Breaches; yet if we conſider the uncertainty of Humane Life, and other Circumſtances, it is no way ſafe to delay the accompliſhing this work to another Reign: for if we ſlip our preſent Opportunities, we may hereafter repent it, when it is too late. *Poſt eſt occaſio calva.*

2. *This Union will be the moſt effectual means to ſecure the Proteſtant Religion againſt the Deſigns of Papiſts and others.* The Papiſts have been in all Reigns contriving the ruine of the Proteſtant Religion and Intereſt in *England*; and to accompliſh their Deſigns, have been continually improving our Diviſions againſt us. This has been the great Engine, they have made uſe of to ruine the Proteſtant Religion, both in Foreign Parts, and here at home. To this end, they have kindled and fomented the Flames of Diviſion continually among us. I think it might be eaſily manifeſted, that the Papiſts have been at the bottom of all thoſe Diviſions, which have, and ſtill do waſte and weaken the Proteſtant Intereſt in theſe Kingdoms. By this means, what they cannot do, either by the force of Arms, or dint of Argument, they are in hopes to accompliſh by our own inteſtine Diviſions. They know the advantage of acting by that Maxim, *Divide and Rule.*

They know there is nothing can undermine the Reformation, like that. Tho' they forbid their Followers to conſult the Scriptures, yet in this they conſult them themſelves; for we find they are not unacquainted with our Saviour's Politicks, who has told us that a Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf cannot ſtand. If therefore our Differences and Diviſions among our ſelves are ſo very advantageous to the Popiſh Deſigns of ruining the Proteſtant Religion, and are the great Engines by which they are endeavouring to accompliſh this their Helliſh Contrivance; then certainly it is an Union among our ſelves, that alone can moſt effectually diſappoint and baffle them. Let us make what Laws we will againſt them, we ſhall never root out that reſtleſs Generation of Men from among us, unleſs we unite among our ſelves: for ſo long as they can crumble us into pieces, they will be ſtill hoping, that at laſt the happy Juncture will come, when, weakned by our own Diſſentions, they ſhall totally deſtroy that Intereſt, which they have already divided. What can therefore be done half ſo effectually for the ſecurity of the Proteſtant Religion, as to unite us? This is what they are moſt afraid of; this is the thing they are uſing their utmoſt endeavours to prevent. This is what alone can make us formidable to the Papiſts, and which will blaſt their hopes for ever. This is therefore what every zealous Proteſtant ſhould endeavour after, and pray for the accompliſhing of.

3. *This Union will be a great means of composing the Civil Differences and Factions, which do continually vex and disturb the State.* Factions in the State, have very often their rise from Factions in Religion; and if they have not always their rise from them, yet very often they are heightened by them. Differences in Religion make Men jealous and afraid of one another; and fear of each other naturally produces Cruelty to each other. The Church is afraid of being undermined by the Dissenters, and therefore they think it their Prudence to keep them under; the Dissenters are afraid of the Church, that they, if it were in their power, would deprive them of the Liberty they now enjoy to worship God according to the Dictates of their own Consciences, and therefore they think it their Prudence to do what they can to curb and lessen their Authority, or even quite to overthrow it. From these Counter-designs of the differing Parties, proceed very often State-factions: For, on the one hand, the Church useth her Authority to crush those, who she believes are endeavouring to undermine her; and on the other hand, the Dissenters are using their Artifices to ward off the blow, and secure themselves, or perhaps to return it if they have opportunity. By these counteractings of the two differing Factions, the State is very often imbroiled and weakened. If therefore between these two Parties there could be any agreement, if there were found any common Basis in which they might center, all those Broils, which are occasioned in

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the State by theſe Breaches and Diviſions, would be prevented. Then the Diſſenters would not be afraid of the Church-men, nor the Church-men of the Diſſenters, for that they would be cemented into one Body; and what a mighty ſtrengthening this would be to the State, I leave to the Judgment of any one tolerably verſed in Politicks.

4. *This Union would promote that further Project of a Civil Union with* Scotland. This is a Project, which has as often miſcarried hitherto, as it has been attempted. I do not pretend to determine, whether ſuch an Union will be of advantage to the Kingdom, or no; I love not to meddle with things beyond my Sphere, I therefore leave the determination of this to thoſe, who underſtand this matter better than (I confeſs) I do; but in caſe ſuch an Union be deſigned, and will be advantageous to us, there is nothing like to make the Attempt ſucceſsful, ſo much as an Union in Religion among our ſelves. There are three things neceſſary to incorporate two People, That their King, Laws and Religion ſhould be the ſame; where any of theſe are different, or diſtinct, it will prove almoſt impoſſible to incorporate two People any other way than by ſubduing the one to the other by conqueſt. A difference in any one of theſe three things will render all Treaties of Union ineffectual. Now in reſpect of the preſent ſtate of the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*, they have the ſame King, and have ſo had for the ſpace of almoſt an hundred Years; there is therefore no hindrance

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of this Union can arise from thence. As to the Laws of either Kingdom, what difficulties may arise from thence to the hindrance of this Union, and the Means to obviate them, I leave to the Lawyers to consider. But yet, as I suppose, the Laws of both Kingdoms are grounded upon Justice and Right Reason, and therefore in respect of their Equity, and the Justice of them, are substantially the same; so I believe the Difficulties, arising from this Diversity in the Laws, may be surmounted by the strenuous Endeavours of the Learned in the Law in either Kingdom. The great difficulty, that will therefore lie in the way of this Union, whenever attempted, will arise from the difference of Religion in either. Tho' both Kingdoms are Protestants, and their Faith and Religion substantially the same; yet the Discipline and Modes of Worship in either Kingdom are different; and this will render all Treaties of Union very difficult, if not impossible to be effected, unless some expedient be found out to compose and heal this mighty difference: for Men have a greater regard to, and generally are fonder of their particular Discipline and Rites, than their common Faith. The only way to heal this difference, will be by uniting (if possible) both Churches; and the way to this Union, is an Union among our selves: For if the Church of *England* opens her Arms so wide, as to embrace and receive into her Communion all those reasonable and pious Persons, who now separate from her, as scrupling some things she enjoyns

joyns her Members; it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that then the Church of *Scotland* may be brought to comply alſo with her Terms, ſeeing the Reaſons why the Church of *Scotland* differs from that of *England*, are much the ſame with thoſe which the Diſſenters in *England* alledge againſt Communion with her. And if once an Union in Diſcipline and Worſhip, between the two Churches of *England* and *Scotland*, were effected, it would be a very great ſtep to a Civil Union and Incorporation of the two People. Tho' if ſuch an Union ſhould not be thought advantageous to us, or if the Attempt made for this Union in the State ſhould fail, it would be a very great advantage to the Church of *England*, if (for a few alterations in her Worſhip and Diſcipline) by the accompliſhment of ſuch an Union betwixt the two Churches, ſhe could gain ſuch a great enlargement of her Borders. But if this neither ſhould be the effect of her Condeſcenſion; yet it will be to our everlaſting Honour, that we in *England* have thus manifeſted our willingneſs, not only to give Satisfaction to our weak Brethren at home; but alſo to come to ſuch a temper, as may be a fit Foundation for a more intimate Union betwixt the two Siſter Churches, between whom the diſtance at preſent is ſo wide.

5. *An Union at Home, may further and advance an Union between the* Lutheran *and* Calviniſt *Churches abroad.* Small Beginnings have ſometimes had very conſiderable Effects: And who knows, but that if we here would

would but ſet the Example, God might bleſs us in *England* with being the firſt Beginners of a Catholick Union among all Proteſtants? What an Honour this would reflect upon the Church of *England*, to be, by her own Example, the Promoter of the Univerſal Peace of *Iſrael*, I leave others to judge. But tho' this ſhould not be the conſequence of this Union here, yet certainly the Reproach of being unable to heal her own Breaches wou'd be done away, and the Church of *England*, whoſe Glory is now ſullied by the Defection of ſo many of her Members from her, would then be the Honour of Chriſtianity, and the Glory of the Reformation: She would then ſhine by her own luſtre, and would reſemble the City of God above, while that ſhe appeared to be indeed the Pattern of Primitive Purity and Charity: She might then juſtly challenge to her ſelf the Umpirage and Arbitration of the Differences abroad. It was a cutting Reply which was once made by a foreign Divine to a Divine of our own Church, who now very worthily fills one of the Sees thereof, who, when he was preſſing with all the Topicks he could make uſe of to that purpoſe, an Union between the *Lutherans* and *Calviniſts*, as neceſſary on many accounts, was took up with this ſharp Reply, *That he wonder'd much to ſee a Divine of the Church of* England *preſs That ſo much upon him, when we, notwithſtanding the Dangers we were in, could not agree our own Differences. Let the Church of* England (ſays he farther) *heal her own Breaches, and then all the reſt of*

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the Reformed Churches will with great reſpect admit of her Mediation to heal theirs. What a tendency to Peace abroad, might the beginnings of Peace here at home have! Oh that God would enlighten and direct us, that we might be diſpoſed to Peace and Union! There is nothing could reflect more Glory on our Church, than this; there is nothing can poſſibly raiſe and advance her Reputation, among the Reformed Churches abroad, more than this.

6. *An Union among all ſober and reaſonable Chriſtians, would in a great meaſure prevent thoſe Soul-damning Errors of the* Deiſts *and* Socinians, *whereby Religion is undermined, and the Faith of the Church endangered.* It is a mournful Conſideration, That in a Nation, which profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, damning Errors and Hereſies, ſo inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity as thoſe of the *Socinians* and *Deiſts* are, ſhould grow and ſpread ſo faſt among the People. It is eaſie to diſcern in what Ground theſe Weeds grow. That theſe deſtructive Errors, ſo prejudicial to the Souls of Men, and diſhonourable to the Proteſtant Religion profeſt by us, are propagated by the Papiſts, will appear to any who doth but conſider the Nation and Stock from whence the great Patron of the *Socinian* Cauſe is deſcended. I am credibly informed, that by Nation he is *Iriſh*, and by Stock *Popiſh*. For, that his Mother was a Papiſt, I was informed by thoſe who liv'd in the ſame Family where he converſed, tho' under a Diſguiſe for a conſiderable time; but yet under that Diſguiſe he

e acknowledged as much to the Family as I ave aſſerted concerning him. By the way herefore, I think it as reaſonable, that this etrayer of the Faith of the Holy Jeſus whoſe Tenets are ſo pernicious, and whoſe Doctrines are thus oppoſite to the Faith of he Reformed Churches, whoſe Deſcent is o certainly Popiſh, if he himſelf be not, as many are apt to think, a Papiſt in Orders) hould be made an Example of Publick Juſtice s well as thoſe who openly profeſs the Roniſh Faith: He deſerves it more than theſe, n as much as a ſecret Foe is more dangerous han an open Enemy. Thus we ſee, that hoſe who dare not directly, under a Proteſtant Government, ſet up for Popery, do by ndirect corruptions of our Faith openly endeavour to obtain their End. From whence, by the way, we may learn, That while we, by our Diviſions, are eager to weaken our ſelves, the Papiſts are not aſleep; but, laying hold of every opportunity to ruine us. As theſe Opinions are propagated by the Papiſts, ſo we, by our Animoſities and Contentions with each other, give them fit opportunities of ſpreading their pernicious Doctrines; to which purpoſe, they are daily improving the Toleration of Tender Conſciences againſt us all. And what Opportunities do we put into their hands to make the beſt advantage of their time? For, while we ſhould be defending the Common Faith againſt the common Underminers of it, every one is engaged in the Defence of his own Tenets againſt thoſe of his Brother, tho' it may

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be they are not worth the defending; and in the mean time the Defence of the Common Faith lies neglected. I can compare our Case to nothing but a Town on fire, where while every one is endeavouring (not to extinguish the Fire which burns the Town, but) to save his own House, the whole is consumed. Thus Christians, while they are every one maintaining their own unnecessary Tenets, neglect the Defence of the Common Faith, until they are all in danger of being overtaken by, and involved in the Common Destruction, brought upon us by those Underminers of it. If ever we would avoid the Mischiefs which our intestine Divisions will certainly bring upon us, if not prevented by our own Prudence; if ever we would crush these growing Errors, and disappoint thereby the Designs of our Enemies; we must come to an Union and Agreement among our selves. If we were once united, and the petty Differences among us laid asleep, we should better observe our Opposers, and be more at leisure to defend our Faith: Till such an Union be effected, our Religion cannot be safe, but we shall continually be exposed to the Assaults of our Enemies. I wish therefore we may see the Necessity of Uniting before our Divisions have so far weaken'd us that an Union among us will be of no advantage to us.

7. *An Union among all pious Christians would very much facilitate the Work of Reformation among us.* The debauching the Manners of Men, is another Artifice whereby the Papists

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are endeavouring to ruine and deſtroy our Religion. They know, that the way to make Men of any Religion, is, firſt to make them of none. I make no doubt, but that much of that univerſal Depravation of Manners, which now we have cauſe to lament and bewail, and which is almoſt grown too mighty to be mattered by the utmoſt Efforts made againſt it, is owing to the Artifice and Contrivance of Papiſts. By this general Depravation of our Manners, the Papiſts have a twofold Advantage over our Religion; hereby they have matter afforded for the reproaching the Proteſtant Religion, as a Sink of Uncleanneſs and all manner of Immorality; hereby alſo Men are diſpoſed to entertain Popery, whenever it ſhall obtain the Aſcendency among us: for when Men are once unhinged from every Religion, they are qualified for the embracing that Religion which ſhall be uppermoſt. To diſappoint and defeat therefore the Enemies of our Religion, in their hopes ariſing from either of theſe Advantages, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the Practice of Religion ſhould be encouraged among us. There are indeed great Attempts made to effect this difficult and almoſt inſurmountable Work; and God has bleſſed the Endeavours that have been uſed to bring it to ſome Perfection, wonderfully: This is (as a worthy Divine lately obſerved) the only thing almoſt that looks with a proſperous Aſpect upon us. But tho' there are many Endeavours uſed with Succeſs to bring about this Reformation among us; yet the

one thing needful is ſtill wanting, *viz. An Union among ſerious Chriſtians.* So long as there are Contentions among good Men about Trifles, there will be thoſe who, becauſe there are Differences in Religion, will believe there is no Religion; who therefore will live as they liſt. I confeſs it is no good Argument, that becauſe there are Differences in Religion, therefore there is no Religion: This is as tho', becauſe as to all the particular Circumſtances of the Nature of any one thing in the World no two Men perhaps in the World are univerſally agreed, that therefore there is nothing at all in the World. It ſhould rather be an Argument, That becauſe there are ſo many Diſputes about it, there muſt be therefore ſome ſuch thing as Religion: *Ignoti nulla cupido.* But yet tho' this Argument is not conſequential and good, yet it is an Argument that by Experience is found to be very powerful in ſwaying the corrupt Minds of Men. If therefore we would take off the Prejudices of Men againſt Religion, we muſt lay aſide our Heats, and compoſe our Differences: Unity is the only way to reform us effectually, and with ſucceſs. Did good Men but conſider how many bad Men their Differences make, they would be careful how they rend the ſeamleſs Coat of Chriſt lightly. So miſchievous are Differences, that ſmall Truths ſhould not divide us eaſily. If we underſtand it of Truths not neceſſary, that was a noble Saying of *Eraſmus, Adeo inviſæ ſunt mihi diſcordiæ, ut veritas etiam contentioſa diſpliceat.* I hate Diſcord ſo much,

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that Truth it ſelf diſpleaſes me when it is a matter of Contention.

8. *It is the Intereſt of all Parties, that an Union ſhould, upon reaſonable terms, be made between the Church men and the ſober Diſſenters.* I have often admired, that what is ſo much every body's Intereſt, has been ſo much, and by ſo many, oppoſed. I know no Perſon, but the Papiſt, whoſe Intereſt it is not to promote, but oppoſe this Union. That therefore it has been hitherto prevented, is not becauſe it interferes with the Intereſt of any Party of Proteſtants; but, becauſe it interferes with the Popiſh Intereſt: Theſe are the Men, who by their Artifice and Cunning have hitherto with too great Succeſs divided us. Had we but known, either what is the Intereſt of Religion, or what is our own Intereſt, we ſhould not have ſo long continued to maintain and keep up our Differences, but ſhould have compoſed them long e're this. To illuſtrate this Reaſon more fully to the Capacity of every Man, I ſhall evidence it to be the ſpecial Intereſt, not only of the Church in general, but of the Nobility and Gentry in particular; as alſo of the Diſſenters, to join their Endeavours jointly to promote and bring about this Union.

1. It is the great Intereſt of the *Churchmen*, that this Union ſhould be effected. By this Addition of her now ſeparated Brethren, her Beauty and Strength would be much encreaſed. It is with the Church as with a piece of Architecture, the larger the Foundations are laid, the more magnificent and

ſtrong the Superſtructure is like to be. There is nothing can render the Church more formidable to her Enemies, or ſafe againſt their Attempts, than an Union among all ſober Proteſtants; by this means her Diviſions, which give ſuch a great Advantage to her Enemies, will be healed, and her Borders enlarged, by the Addition of a Society of Men who are zealous for the Proteſtant Faith, and (if the Church were but better acquainted with them) would be found to be capable of defending her againſt all thoſe Errors with which ſhe is on every ſide attack'd, and who would therefore join heartily in her Defence againſt the Oppoſitions of Papiſts and others. I am ſatisfied, that if both ſides were but better acquainted, or did but know each other better, there would not be that Averſion to Unity which has hitherto appeared too much on both ſides. It is Prejudice, and Ignorance of each others Diſpoſitions, doth on both ſides keep open the Breach, to the great diſadvantage of the Church, and weakning the Proteſtant Intereſt.

2. As it is the great Intereſt of the Church in general, ſo in a ſpecial manner is it the Intereſt of *the Nobility and Gentry*, that this Union ſhould be effected. In the Safety and Preſervation of the Proteſtant Religion doth conſiſt that Security which Theſe have for a great part of their Eſtates; which they muſt certainly part with, if ever Popery ſhould get the upper hand among us. It was eſteem'd a great piece of Policy in *Henry* the Eighth,

Eighth, to divide the Church Lands among the Nobility and Gentry: this indeed I never look'd on as an effect of the Policy of that Prince, but rather of his laviſh and profuſe Temper; but whether it were from the one or the other, I confeſs, that under God it has been the great Security of the Proteſtant Intereſt among us. Now it is the Intereſt even of thoſe who have no regard either to the Good of the Church, or the Salvation of their Souls, out of a regard to their Eſtates, to defend and maintain the Proteſtant Religion; becauſe if that is overturned among us, they muſt part with a very conſiderable part of their Eſtates to the former Proprietors of them. We all know the Temper and Diſpoſition of the Church of *Rome* too well, to believe that if once they recover our Churches, they will patiently permit us to enjoy thoſe Lands, without diſturbance, which did once belong to their Churches, and of which, in Right of them, they were then the Poſſeſſors. And if a Reſtitution of theſe muſt be made by the preſent Owners, what an Eclipſe this will be to that Grandeur and Plenty which our Gentry are the Poſſeſſors of, I leave to thoſe to judge, who conſider that before the Reformation one Third part of the Profits of our Lands did belong to the Church. If therefore theſe would effectually ſecure their Eſtates, they muſt ſecure the Proteſtant Religion; for the Intereſt of the one, and of the other, are inſeparably joined: And if ever they would ſecure the Proteſtant Reli-

gion from the Attempts of Papiſts, and thereby ſecure their Eſtates, they muſt unite the Profeſſors of it: for, in the Union of theſe doth conſiſt the Strength of the Proteſtant Intereſt in *England*, and by conſequence the Security of the Riches and Grandeur of our Gentry. In a word, it is ſo far the Intereſt of Theſe that this Union ſhould be accompliſhed, that until this be effected, neither our Religion, nor their Eſtates, can be ſecure from the reſtleſs Endeavours of the Papiſts.

3. It is in a ſpecial manner the Intereſt of the *Diſſenters*, that there ſhould be an Union effected between the Church-men and Them. Now, at moſt, they are but tolerated; they live at beſt but precariouſly, upon the uncertain Bounty of their Benefactors; and therefore are neceſſarily obliged to be ſubject to the peeviſh Humours of every fretful Perſon who has either a Power or Will to raiſe Parties or Factions amongſt them. But if this Union were effected, they would then become a Part of the preſent Eſtabliſhment; they would have a certain and legal Maintenance; they would not then have ſuch a Dependance upon the People for it; and therefore would be capable of a freer Exerciſe of their Miniſtry than now they are; they need not then be afraid of diſpleaſing every capricious Temper, but might with a greater freedom reprove the Immorality of their Auditors than now they can.

9. *This Union is feiſible, and eaſie to be effected.* There is nothing wanting but a peaceable Diſpoſition in the ſeveral Parties concerned,

cerned, to effect and accompliſh it. What is it that divides us? It is no fundamental Article of Faith, or neceſſary Duty of Religion; we have all the ſame God, the ſame Saviour, the ſame Faith, the ſame Baptiſm, the ſame Bible; we diſagree about nothing that is neceſſary to Religion: All the Difference which has ſo long divided us, is only about ſome Modes of Diſcipline and Worſhip, which are not by either Side eſteemed neceſſary either to the Being or well-ordering of the Worſhip of God; about ſome little Things, which by one Side are accounted indifferent, by the other Side unlawful, or at leaſt inexpedient. What a little matter therefore is required to unite and heal all our Breaches? Only the Alteration of a few unneceſſary Things, which the one Side cannot (as they pretend) comply with for fear of offending God, as judging them unlawful; whereas the other ſide look upon them as things indifferent, which they may retain or aboliſh at their Pleaſure, without any Offence againſt God, which therefore they may upon this occaſion part with without offering any violence or wrong to their Conſciences. And if ever theſe things, which are alterable in their Nature, and diſputable as to their Lawfulneſs, are according to their Nature to be altered, it is now, when the Common Cauſe of Religion, and the Union of the Church, doth ſo much call for it.

Thus have I given ſeveral Reaſons, why an Union among all ſober and reaſonable Proteſtants is abſolutely neceſſary for the Good

of the Church and Intereſt of Religion. I proceed now, according to the Method I propoſed, to conſider what is, or may, with any pretence of Reaſon, be alledged by any againſt it. This I ſhall the more willingly do, that by this means a matter of ſo great Concernment for the Benefit and Advantage of Religion, may be ſet in its true and proper Light. In performing this part of the Work, I ſhall (laying aſide all Prejudice and Partiality, the great Enemies to naked Truth) propoſe what is or may be objected againſt the Neceſſity of this Union, in its full force and ſtrength.

Object. 1. It may perhaps be pleaded by ſome, that it is beneath the Church to condeſcend ſo far, as to court ſuch factious Separatiſts as the Diſſenters are to an Union with her; That it is the Duty of her ſtubborn and rebellious Sons to return to their Obedience, by complying with the innocent and laudable Cuſtoms of their Holy Mother; That for the Church to forego her Rites and Ceremonies to pleaſe a few factious Perſons, who will never be quiet, but are like the troubled Seas, which continually are caſting up Mire and Filth, is to expoſe her Authority to Contempt, and to make her vile and deſpicable; That the only way to maintain the Honour and Grandeur of the Church, is to maintain her Authority over her Members, and to defend her Rites againſt all Oppoſers.

Reply.

Reply. There are ſeveral things contained in this Objection fit to be conſidered: as, That it is the Duty of Chriſtians to ſubmit to the innocent and commendable Cuſtoms of that Church of which they are Members; and, That it is neceſſary that the Authority of the Church ſhould be maintained: That at leaſt one way to maintain that, is to defend her Rites and Ceremonies againſt Oppoſers: That the Diſſenters are factious, and but few; and, That it is beneath the Church to condeſcend ſo far, as to court them to an Union with her. Theſe, I think, are all thoſe things which are of any weight or moment in the Objection: All which therefore I ſhall in their order conſider.

1. I grant that it is the great Duty of every Chriſtian, in his place, to preſerve the Peace of that Church of which he is a Member, by a Submiſſion to the innocent and laudable Cuſtoms thereof. No Man ought needleſly to violate the Church's Peace by a cauſleſs Separation from her upon the Account of the Rites of that Church whereof he is a Member. Tho' I cannot allow a cauſleſs Separation, as ſuch, to be, in the proper and ſtrict Signification of the Word, a Schiſm; yet, I cannot but look upon it as a Sin of a more Scarlet-dye than that of Schiſm is, becauſe the evil thereof is more heinous, and of a greater extent. He that doth, without a juſt Ground for it, rend the ſeamleſs Coat of Chriſt, ſinneth greatly againſt God. A Man ought to be very well ſatisfied that the Grounds upon which he doth it are juſtifi-

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able, before he withdraws himſelf from the Communion of a Church. Some indifferent Rites are no juſtifiable Grounds of a Separation. Every Church has its Rites, which are innocent in themſelves, and neceſſary for the Order and Well-management of the Church; with theſe her Members ought to comply, and not either from Faction, or Intereſt, for the ſake of theſe to divide the Church: this all reaſonable Men muſt neceſſarily be convinced of. The great Queſtion between the Church-men and the Diſſenters, ſuch of them I mean who are reaſonable Men, is not, Whether the Church has not Authority to impoſe Rites, or, Whether it is not the Duty of her Members to comply with them, ſo be it they be innocent and harmleſs; this, as it is maintained by the one Party, ſo it is granted by all ſober and reaſonable Men on the other ſide: But the Queſtion turns here, Whether thoſe Rites the Church enjoins are innocent, and not, on the contrary, ſinful? The Church pleads for the former; the Diſſenters aſſert the latter, and therefore plead, that they cannot comply with them for fear of offending God. I will not pretend to determine this, either on the one ſide or the other. There are ſome, that think it would put a final Iſſue to this matter, if the Diſtinction of Rites and Ceremonies into ſimple and mixt, were but allowed and ſeriouſly conſidered by thoſe who diſagree about the Rites in Diſpute. Simple Rites and Ceremonies, are only a Determination of thoſe General Circumſtances of Worſhip, which are

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in general propoſed in the Scripture, but are left to the particular Determination of the ſeveral Churches, as their ſeveral Circumſtances do require. Such Rites and Ceremonies as theſe the Church has an Authority to decree, ordain, determine, and enjoin; and in theſe it is a Chriſtian's Duty to ſubmit. Mixt Rites and Ceremonies are ſuch, which either are not, or cannot be, enjoined or obſerved, without the Injunction or Obſervation of ſomething new, added to the matter of Divine Worſhip. Theſe Ceremonies or Rites, the Diſſenters ſay, and the Church allows it, that ſhe has no Right to enjoin, neither is it the Duty of her Members to practiſe them; but, on the contrary, to oppoſe them, as Innovations in the Worſhip of God.

2. I grant that it is neceſſary, for the Honour of Religion, and the Safety of the Church, that her Authority ſhould be maintained and ſupported. The only Way to preſerve Peace and Order in the Church, is to keep up a due Government in her, according to the Canons, either expreſly laid down in the Scripture, or which are, according to the Power which God has granted to the Church, eſtabliſhed by her for this purpoſe; provided there be always a ſpecial regard had to the Limitation of this Power in Scripture. For tho' the Diſſenters deny the Church's Power to decree or ordain mixt Ceremonies, yet all ſober Men muſt grant, That the Church hath a Power of decreeing ſimple and naked Rites; in which

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Senſe I am apt to think that moſt Diſſenters would readily Subſcribe the 20th Article of the Church of *England*. If this be not granted, it is impoſſible that there ſhould be any Government or Order in the Church, but the whole muſt neceſſarily be a heap of Confuſion: for, What Order can there be in a Church, who has no Authority, or whoſe Authority is not maintained and ſupported? The great Doubt of many ſober Diſſenters is not, whether the Church's Authority is to be maintained, this is by all ſober Men granted; but, whether the Church doth not go beyond her Authority, in ordaining and enjoining the Obſervation of thoſe things which they in their Conſciences believe to be unlawful; and, whether this ſuppoſed Extent of her Authority beyond its bounds, be not an Act of Tyranny over the Conſciences of Men; whether therefore, tho' Men are bound for Conſcience-ſake to ſubmit to the Church's lawful Authority, they are for the ſame reaſon bound and obliged to ſubmit to her in the things in diſpute.

3. I do deny, That the way to maintain the Church's Authority, is to defend her Rites and Ceremonies againſt all Oppoſers. This is indeed the way which ſome high Ceremonialiſts have taken to maintain it; but with what ſucceſs, the Effects ſhew us. The moſt effectual way to maintain the Church's Authority, is to defend her Faith from all the Corruptions with which deluded and obſtinate Hereticks are every day endeavouring to undermine and ruine it; as alſo, to be careful

careful that her Members, especially her Ministers, do recommend this Faith by their own holy Life and Example to others. It has been a very great Mistake which the Church, prompted thereunto by her secret, but implacable Enemies, has almost ever since the Reformation made, in exerting the edge of her Power and Authority (which ought to have been levelled chiefly against those who have either innovated in her Faith, or apostatiz'd from the strict Rules of Holiness) against those who have only scrupled some Rites which the Church her self looks upon to be but indifferent, and therefore, without any Detriment to the Faith, or Practice of Religion, may be let alone. This Mistake about the proper Objects for the exercise of her Power, has very much impaired and lessened the Church's Authority. The Primitive Church took another course to maintain it, which proved much more successful, notwithstanding all the Difficulties she then laboured under by the violent Oppressions of her Enemies. The Church was not then fond of pompous Ceremonies; the Worship of God was then (as an excellent Prelate observes) pure and spiritual, simple, and free from Cost and Pomp, from Theatrical Shews as well as idolatrous Rites: And as they were not fond of these things, so neither did they exert their Authority in the defence of them; they turned the edge of their Authority another way, and employed their spiritual Power to preserve the Church's Faith from Error, and the Practice of her Members from

Scandal.

Scandal. They did not cenſure Perſons who were ſound in the Faith, and exclude them who were unblameable in their Lives from Communion with them, only becauſe they could not comply with every indifferent Rite which they look'd upon as decent: Their Cenſures were pronounced againſt the Corrupters of their Faith; their Excommunications were denounced againſt the unjuſtifiable and obſtinate Impieties of their Members. While this Temper laſted among them, they flouriſhed in the Unity of the Faith, and the pure and holy ſimplicity of their Worſhip was attended with the daily addition of new Converts to Chriſtianity: The Holineſs of their Lives recommended their Doctrines to all about them; ſo that the Church was daily enlarged in her Borders. As this Spirit in the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity declined, and a Value and Eſteem for a pompous and theatrical Worſhip encreaſed; ſo the Glory of *Iſrael* did gradually decline, and the Subſtance of Chriſtianity by degrees dwindled into a mere Shadow: Holineſs, the great Evidence of the Effects of the Church's Authority, decreaſed, and Pomp and Grandeur, the great Oppoſites to Primitive Purity and Simplicity, encreaſed daily. By this means indeed vain Minds were gratified, but ſpiritual Minds were greatly offended. A theatrical Worſhip, abounding with pompous Ceremonies, may pleaſe and tickle vain Fancies; but it is Simplicity and Purity that doth affect and charm the Heart of a ſerious Perſon: This adds a luſtre to Religion, far beyond all the Pomp

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with which Superſtition can poſſibly vamp it: This ſtrikes her Members with an awe and fear of her Authority, which influences Mens Lives more than the Wonder that is raiſed in them for a time, by a view of her outward Grandeur, can do. This may be laid down as a Rule, that the leſs Ceremony and Pomp, and the more Simplicity and Purity, there is in the Worſhip of any Church, the greater is her Authority over her Members: There is in Simplicity and Purity Charms, which do by an unſeen, but irreſiſtable force, attract and draw Men to Obedience.

4. Another thing fit to be conſidered in this Plea, is what is ſaid in reſpect to the Tempers of the Diſſenters. In this Plea, they are repreſented as a factious and reſtleſs Generation of Men, who ever were, and always will be, troubleſome to the Church. In anſwer to this, As I do not vindicate the Diſſenters, ſo neither can I excuſe the Churchmen. I think there are too many factious and reſtleſs Men among all Parties; and this is the Reaſon why (to the great Advantage of Popery and Irreligion) our Breaches have been kept open ſo long, notwithſtanding the hearty Endeavours of ſome to unite and heal them. I am ſatisfied that many Diſſenters have been very faulty, and have factiouſly endeavoured to keep open our Breaches, either from Intereſt, or a Spirit of Oppoſition; and this they have been too ſucceſsful in, by ſtill ſtarting new Difficulties, and daily raiſing new Objections againſt the Terms of Communion propoſed by the Church of *England*.

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But tho' there are ſome ſuch factious Perſons among them, yet it doth not follow that they are all ſuch. I know many of them, who are bleſſed not only with a Spirit of Piety, but Moderation alſo; whoſe earneſt Deſire it is, that ſome Expedients might by the Providence of God be found out to heal our Breaches. But as I will not excuſe the Diſſenters, ſo neither can I vindicate the Churchmen: I cannot but think, that they have been highly to blame in this matter: many of theſe have contributed much to our Diviſions, by a too ſtiff Adherency to the Ceremonial part of our Worſhip, if not by an addition to it. A rigid Stiffneſs and Bigotry on either ſide is not commendable. If our Breaches are ever healed, it muſt be by yielding ſomewhat on both ſides. That an Union ſhould be effected, it is neceſſary, that on the one hand the Church ſhould part with, or at leaſt leave them in their Uſe as they are in their Nature, thoſe things which are indifferent to themſelves, and obnoxious to the Diſſenters. It is alſo neceſſary, on the other hand, that the Diſſenters ſhould not ſeek after Objections againſt the Terms propoſed, but ſhould take things which are capable of a double Senſe or Deſign in the beſt of the Two, and that they ſhould comply with what they look upon as indifferent, but the Church as neceſſary to preſerve her Order and Diſcipline. I do indeed think, that the Diſſenters have, by their Jealouſies, and taking things in the worſt ſenſe, created to themſelves many Difficulties. I ſhall only obſerve this, that

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as two parallel Lines will never meet unleſs they incline a little to each other; ſo two contrary Opinions, ſtiffly maintained, will never coaleſce, unleſs either Party yield ſomewhat.

5. Another thing fit to be conſidered in this Objection, is the Numbers of thoſe who ſeparate themſelves from the Communion of the Church of *England*. I confeſs, that their Factions among themſelves, being divided into ſo many Parties, without being united into one Body, doth render them the Contempt, and not the Fear, of the Church. But yet if we conſider the Numbers of thoſe who do withdraw themſelves from the Communion of the Church of *England*, we muſt own that the Breach is very great: And tho' they are not able themſelves to endanger the preſent Eſtabliſhment, yet it muſt be confeſſed, that ſo great a Separation doth not only ſully and cloud her Glory very much, but weakens her Strength, whereby ſhe is and will be, in a time of Danger, leſs able to maintain her ſelf againſt the common Enemies of our Religion, the Papiſts. Further, if we conſider the Growth and Increaſe of thoſe two dangerous Factions of the Anabaptiſts and Quakers; the one of which, by putting every ordinary Fellow in the Pulpit, is ſubverting the very Order of the Miniſtry; and the other of which do, by their profeſt Doctrines, aim at the Deſtruction of all Magiſtracy, and are endeavouring to reduce all into a State of Anarchy and Confuſion: I ſay, if we conſider the Numbers of either of

these two Parties, as also what Numbers of Deists and Atheists, who are Dissenters from all Religion, are made by our Divisions; the Church will see abundant Reason to part with a little to those who differ but a little from them, that so the whole may be preserved from the growing Power of these dangerous Enemies, who even upon the Account of their Numbers are not to be despised.

6. The last thing worthy of Consideration in the Objection before mentioned, is this; The Plea, that it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to court the Dissenters to an Union with her. This Plea indeed might become the Mouth of a Member of the Romish Church, whose intolerable Pride is notoriously known to the World; but certainly it doth not become the Mouth of any of the Members of that Church, who owns her self Protestant. And yet, if we may judge by the Actions of some Persons, they have by those declared, that it is their fixed Judgment, that it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to invite those who dissent from her to an Union with her. Certainly those Persons who can think thus, have forgot, or at least do not consider, that Humility and Condescension is the greatest Honour of that Church who professes her self to be the Spouse of Him who himself was a Pattern of Humility and Condescension. If it were not beneath the Primitive Church, for the healing of that great Breach between the Jewish and Gentile Christians which did then divide the Church, to submit to so great

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an Alteration in her Government, as to admit of (for a time at leaſt) two Biſhops in the ſame City, which they did, if we may believe the Reverend Dr. *Hammond*, and other Great Men of the *Engliſh* Church; then it cannot be beneath the Honour of the *Engliſh* Church to invite the ſober Diſſenters, who do not require any ſubſtantial Alterations in her Government or Diſcipline, but only the laying aſide ſome Declarations and Subſcriptions, which are as Clogs to their Conſciences, and the aboliſhing a few indifferent Rites, to Communion with her. If it were not beneath the Great Apoſtle St. *Paul* to part with ſeveral Privileges and Immunities, which were perſonal, and to become all things to all Men, that he might by any means win ſome; then certainly it is not beneath the Church of *England* to part with ſome little things for the ſake of Union, that thereby thoſe Numbers of Diſſenters, which by her Condeſcenſion in all probability may be won over to the Church, might be gained to her Communion, whereby her Borders would be greatly enlarged. Laſtly, If it were not beneath our Saviour, whoſe Spouſe the Church of *England* profeſſes to be, and whom we are commanded to imitate and follow, tho' he were the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, to condeſcend ſo far, and to ſtoop ſo low, as not only to court and invite the meaneſt Sinner to accept of that Salvation which is offered in the Goſpel, and this with the moſt earneſt Entreaties, but alſo to die for obſtinate and rebellious Sinners; then

certainly it cannot be beneath the Church, to condeſcend ſo far as to invite the Diſſenters to an Union with her, tho' it be at the Expence of ſome of her Rites and Ceremonies. Theſe are Examples which ſhould incline Perſons of every Party to Humility and Condeſcenſion, and to make as large Steps as poſſibly they can towards an Union amongſt us. Thus have I impartially conſidered what is worthy of Conſideration in this Objection. I ſhall therefore proceed unto the next.

Object. 2. It may perhaps be objected by ſome againſt an Union, That if the Church ſhould, for the ſake of an Union with the Diſſenters, part with ſome of her Rites and Ceremonies, which are indifferent to her; That this would not heal the Breach, but encourage factious Perſons, by finding daily fault with her Diſcipline and Worſhip, to ſeek Pretences to withdraw themſelves from her Communion, unleſs the Church would alſo come to their Terms, how unreaſonable ſoever they were. That this Compliance of the Church may therefore, when Factions are ſo very common among us, endanger the total Loſs of her Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline; in as much as from the Church's Compliance with the modeſt Requeſt of ſome, others alſo would be emboldned to hope for her Compliance with their unreaſonable Demands, tho' inconſiſtent with the Peace and Order of her Government and Worſhip. That therefore it is ſafeſt for the Church, without abating any thing, to maintain her Ground againſt all her Rebellious Children. *Re-*

Reply. There are alſo in this Objection ſome Things worthy of Conſideration, ſuch as are theſe: That Factions are now very riſe; That any Compliance on the Church's Part would encourage them; and, That this might have an ill Influence upon the Eccleſiaſtical Government and Diſcipline. If any one of theſe Things, except the Riſeneſs of Factions, could be undeniably proved, I ſhould be very far from preſſing the Church to the leaſt Condeſcenſion to thoſe who differ from her: I would neither encourage Faction, nor yet by any means would I endanger the Church's Diſcipline and Order. The Deſign of preſſing this matter ſo earneſtly, not only upon the Church, but every reaſonable and pious Perſon, is to ſuppreſs Factions, and prevent the Diviſions ariſing from them; as alſo to prevent the utter Ruine and Loſs of that Diſcipline and Order, which is, (by the Power of Factions, and the Multitude of Diviſions in the Church) in danger of being totally aboliſhed and rooted out.

1. I grant, that Factions are now very riſe, and therefore we ſhould be very careful how we do any thing to encourage or ſtrengthen them. One would think, that the Common Danger we are all in, from Popery on the one Hand, and from Atheiſm and Profaneneſs on the other Hand, ſhould ſtifle and ſuppreſs all our factious Differences, and that the Danger we are in, ſhould induce us to unite for the Defence of our Common Faith. But notwithſtanding our Dangers be ſo great and eminent, that (however ſecure

we may look upon our ſelves to be) I verily believe it never was greater, and tho' if we would but unite for the Common Defence of the Faith, perhaps we never had the like Opportunity put into our Hands to ſecure it againſt all Attempts for the future; yet neither conſidering our Danger on the one Hand, nor our Advantages on the other, inſtead of coming to any Union among our ſelves, we daily grow more factious than other, and our Breaches are every day made wider by the craſty Induſtry of our Enemies, who know how to improve our turbulent Spirits to our own Diſadvantage. I cannot excuſe many of the Diſſenters; for I verily believe, Faction more than Conſcience has influenced many of them, whoſe Deſign it has always been to ruine and overthrow all Order and Diſcipline in the Church, that ſo they may introduce Anarchy and Confuſion, as moſt delightful and advantageous to thoſe whoſe Delight it is to fiſh in troubled Waters. But yet the Faults of a few are not to be caſt upon a whole Party, unleſs eſpecially the Church of *England* can altogether juſtifie every Member of her Communion from all Suſpicion of Guilt in this reſpect. I am ſatisfied, if there had not been too much of Faction on both ſides, our Breaches had not been ſo wide; or if Faction did but ceaſe in both, our Diviſions would quickly be at an happy End. As it is factious, to divide the Church for the ſake of thoſe Things we can, but will not do; ſo it is no leſs factious, to be ſtiff and unmoveable in the maintaining

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of thoſe things we can, but will not part with. This is the Temper of many on both ſides. But there are many, yea very many on both Sides, who are of another, and more heavenly Mind. There are many Diſſenters, who, to my Knowledge, do ſeparate themſelves from the Communion of the Church of *England*, not from Faction, but Conſcience; and who would do any thing, but ſin againſt God, for the ſake of an Union betwixt us. There are many Church-men who earneſtly deſire this Union; and if it were in their Power, would freely part with thoſe little Things which divide us. But it is our Miſery, that this is not the Temper of all on either Side. But that Faction is ſo ſtrong, this indeed ſhould make us very careful, that we do not encourage or ſtrengthen it.

2. It's urged in this Plea againſt an Union, That any Condeſcenſion on the Church's part, will but encourage factious Perſons, and embolden them in their Attempts againſt the Church's Peace. I confeſs, there is a Generation of Men in the World, who are, by the Clemency and Condeſcenſion of their Superiors, rendered more bold in their Offences againſt them: Theſe, as they are exorbitantly wicked, ſo their Diſingenuity, which is equal to their Wickedneſs, renders them undeſerving of their Superior's Clemency. I will not deny, but as there are ſuch diſingenuous Perſons in reſpect of the Civil Actions of Mankind; ſo it is poſſible that there may be Perſons as diſingenuous and wicked as to

Spirituals, who it may be will be emboldened by her Clemency to deſpiſe and trample upon the Church's Authority: Theſe, as they are the worſt of Men, ſo they do not deſerve any Intereſt or Share in the Church's Clemency; neither can I think that they will have any Reaſon to expect it. It is not an Union with theſe unreaſonable Men that I am pleading for; but with thoſe only, who plead for nothing but either an Abolition, or at leaſt an Indifferency, as to the Uſe of thoſe Things which the Church looks upon as indifferent, and the Diſſenters as ſinful; that ſo they may not be obliged to act contrary to the Dictates of their own Conſciences, in complying with thoſe Things which they have ſo great an Averſion to, and for which the Church her ſelf has no greater a Veneration. Neither can I ever be induced to believe, that a complying with the eaſie and reaſonable Requeſt of theſe Men, can be prejudicial in the leaſt to the Intereſt of the Church, or that it will encourage factious Perſons in their Attempts againſt her Peace, in hopes that becauſe ſhe anſwers the reaſonable Requeſt of theſe, that therefore they alſo may, by a factious Separation from her, make their own Terms with her. They may rather expect, That after the Church has manifeſted ſo much Clemency and Condeſcenſion, as to part with what is indifferent to her, for the ſake of an Union with her Diſſenting Brethren; and after ſhe has opened her Arms ſo wide to receive her returning Sons, that ſhe will then make thoſe ungrate-

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ful Perſons, who can thus offend, againſt not only her Diſcipline and Order, but her Clemency and Condeſcenſion alſo, the Examples of her Indignation, by inflicting the ſharpeſt Cenſures upon them.

3. It is inſinuated in this Objection, as tho' the leaſt Condeſcenſion on the Church's part, would have an ill Influence upon her Diſcipline. This can be by no other way, than by the encouragement of Factions, which may embroil and diſturb her Diſcipline, by diſputing her Authority. If therefore it be evident, that this Condeſcenſion and Clemency of the Church will not ſtrengthen or encourage Factions, but on the contrary will weaken and diſcourage them; then the force and ſtrength of this Plea will quickly vaniſh into Smoak. The Diſſenters wiſh, that in ſome ſmall matters her Diſcipline might be corrected; but no reaſonable or good Man can wiſh, or deſire, that the Order and Diſcipline of the Church ſhould be aboliſhed, or that Anarchy ſhould take place therein. Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline is as neceſſary to be preſerved and maintained in the Church, as the Civil Diſcipline in the State. It is not a total Abolition, but a due Limitation of her Authority, according to the Canon of the Scripture, to which they do not now look upon it altogether conformable, which the ſober and modeſt Diſſenters do earneſtly deſire.

Object. 3. It may perhaps be pleaded by ſome againſt the Alteration of any thing for the

the ſake of an Union, That it may be of ill conſequence to the Church, to alter any thing in her Diſcipline and Worſhip. That as Innovations in the State, ſo alſo Innovations in the Church, are very dangerous. That if once the Humour of Innovating in Religion gets footing among us, we know not where, nor when, it will end. That when the ancient Land-marks are removed, we know not where, nor when, they will be fixed again for the future. It may perhaps be farther urged, That in the Memory of our Fathers we have ſeen too diſmal Effects of the Innovations in Religion, ever to attempt any thing of this nature for the future. That to this innovating Humour were all thoſe Confuſions and Diſtractions, both in Church and State, in the time of *Oliver*'s Uſurpation, owing. That therefore it is beſt to keep things as they are.

Reply. I confeſs, Innovations are dangerous, and have produced ſad Effects in the Church; of which, the Inſtance alledged is a deplorable Example. Tho' it muſt be acknowledged, That ſome great things were done at that time; yet, as I cannot juſtifie the Right of that Government, ſo neither can I vindicate all that was then done: great Enormities, both in Civil and Religious Affairs, were then committed. I alſo acknowledge, that the removing old Land-marks before we are come to a full Reſolution where to fix them for the future, is very dangerous; and therefore to prevent any ill Effects

fects which may attend the Alteration of any thing in our Diſcipline or Worſhip, it is neceſſary, that if ever any thing ſhould be done of this nature, that in the doing thereof theſe following Rules and Limitations ſhould be obſerved.

1. It is neceſſary, that theſe Alterations ſhould be made by Authority. Innovations are dangerous where they are made in a Heat, and without the Guide and Direction of Publick Authority. Theſe indeed have produced ſad Effects in the Church. Men are naturally addicted to that which is new; and when once they are beginning to alter, unleſs the Prudence of thoſe in Authority doth ſteadily guide and direct them, we know not where, nor when, they will end. We ſee, that thoſe who have begun only with the Diſcipline of the Church, have not ended without an Apoſtacy and falling off from the Faith and Doctrines of the Church. The firſt Foundations and Grounds of thoſe damnable Opinions (which ſo many have imbibed, and in the Defence of which ſo many have incorporated themſelves into diſtinct Societies, thereby to carry on their Deſigns the better againſt the Church) were at firſt laid in ſome particular Exceptions againſt the Diſcipline and Ceremonies of it. But tho' this has already been, and will again be, the Effects of Innovations in Religion made without Authority; tho' Popular Alterations in the Diſcipline and Government of the Church, made by the giddy Multitude, who have had no other Guide than an ignorant

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Zeal to proceed by, have proved ſo ſcandalous to Religion, and deſtructive to the Peace of the Church; yet, we have no reaſon to fear ſome Alteration in the Ritual Parts of Religion, made by the lawful Authority of the Kingdom, no more than we have reaſon to be afraid of the Repeal of ſome Laws, and the eſtabliſhing of others in the Civil State, by the ſame Authority. Tho' we have reaſon to fear the mad Folly of the giddy Multitude, yet we have no reaſon to be afraid of the prudent and wiſe Reſolves of our Rulers. As I am fully perſwaded, that it is altogether unlawful for any private Perſon, without the Concurrence of Authority, to innovate any thing in the State; ſo alſo I am ſatisfied, that it is unlawful for any private Chriſtian to introduce any Novelties in the Church, or lay aſide any Rites and Ceremonies authorized by Law, without a due Warrant and Authority for it. But yet a juſt and lawful Authority may aboliſh thoſe things which have no other Foundation for their Inſtitution, but that which is Humane. And tho' Hiſtory gives ſome deplorable Inſtances of the ſad Effects of Popular Innovations, promoted by Factions, and carried on without any due Warrant and Authority for it; yet it alſo furniſhes us with ſome Inſtances of the happy and ſucceſsful Iſſue of a Reformation, carried on by the lawful Authority of the Kingdom. It was by this that the Reformation among our ſelves was carried on ſo far, and with ſuch Succeſs, in the days of *Henry* the Eighth, and of his Son K. *Edward*: It was by the Authority

thority of the Kingdom, that it was in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth* brought to the Perfection it is now arrived at. It is wonderful to conſider the wiſe and prudent Steps taken by thoſe excellent Perſons, who were ſo long engaged in that happy Work, to bring it to that Maturity it was brought to at the end of King *Edward*'s Reign. And if either that King had lived longer, or that pious Martyr Archbiſhop *Cranmer* had ſurvived the Fury of Queen *Mary*'s Reign, to have had an influence upon the ſucceeeding Sovereign Queen *Elizabeth*'s Counſels, we have reaſon to believe that it had been brought to ſuch a pitch, that thoſe little things which now divide us had not continued the Bones of Contention among us.

2. It is neceſſary, that the Alterations to be made ſhould only relate to the Ceremonial part of our Worſhip, without infringing the leaſt upon the Authority of our Faith. This is maintained in its Purity by the Church of *England*, and is ſet forth in that incomparable Body of Articles compiled and publiſhed by the Authority of that admirable Princeſs Queen *Elizabeth*. From this Faith I would earneſtly preſs and exhort all Men not to depart one hair's breadth.

3. To prevent all the Inconveniencies which may attend ſuch an Alteration, it is farther neceſſary, that it ſhould not only be done by Authority, but that the things to be altered ſhould be reſolved and agreed on, before that any Law be eſtabliſhed to authorize the Alteration of any thing; leſt the

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preſent Land-marks ſhould be removed, before that we are agreed where to fix them for the future. This would be of dangerous conſequence, in that it would unhinge the preſent Settlement, without eſtabliſhing a new one. This indeed would leave the Diſcipline of the Church in a very great Uncertainty, and produce very great Diſorders and Confuſions in her Adminiſtration. It was therefore the wiſe Contrivance of the firſt Reformers (that they might with Succeſs accompliſh the glorious Work they were engaged in) firſt to agree upon an After-ſettlement, before they unhinged the preſent. They did not attempt to alter the Faith or Practice of the Church, in thoſe things which were at preſent received and practiſed by it, by declaring any thing in the one or the other unlawful, before they were agreed upon what was neceſſary to be believed or done for the future. It is certainly dangerous, to remove a Land-mark from the place it ſtands in at preſent, before we are agreed where it ſhould, and are reſolved where it ſhall, ſtand for the future.

4. To prevent perpetual Alterations, to which Men are very prone when once a fickle Temper and Diſpoſition ſeiſes on them, and which it is very neceſſary in time to check; it is neceſſary that the time wherein theſe Alterations ſhall be made, ſhould be limited by the Magiſtrate; for elſe the Church will always be in danger of new Mutations, by which her Diſcipline will labour under very great Diſorders. The Sum of this Reply

ply therefore is, That there can be no poſſible Danger ariſing from the Alteration of a few things, for the ſake of an Union among Proteſtants, if it be regularly done by Authority, and limited to the Ritual part of our Worſhip; if we be agreed upon what to alter, before we begin to alter, and the time of doing it be duely limited by Authority.

Object. 4. It may perhaps be objected againſt this Union, That the leaving thoſe Ceremonies indifferent as to their Uſe, which are excepted againſt, will deſtroy the Uniformity of our Worſhip; and that this will not therefore produce the deſired Effects, but on the contrary will breed great Animoſities and Contentions among the Members of the Church. And it may be urged by ſome, that it is reaſonable to think, that every one will defend and maintain his own Practice, and on the contrary, be condemning the Practice of thoſe who differ from him. That this will raiſe Diſputes, which will be attended with Heats and Paſſions, to the great prejudice and detriment of the Church's Peace, for the maintaining whereof, it is neceſſary that we ſhould all comply with the Injunction of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 10. 10. *Speak the ſame things.*

Reply. There are three things laid down in this Objection, which it is fit we ſhould conſider. That it is neceſſary, for the Peace of the Church, that there ſhould not only be an Unity of Faith profeſſed by her Members, but

but that alſo there ſhould be an Uniformity in her Worſhip practiſed by them. That the laying aſide the neceſſity of uſing the particular Ceremonies excepted againſt, will deſtroy this Uniformity of Worſhip. And, That this will neceſſarily be attended with great Heats and Animoſities amongſt us.

1. It is urged, That an Uniformity of Worſhip is neceſſary for the maintaining the Church's Peace and Order. I grant indeed, that an Uniformity in the Worſhip of God is very deſirable, if it might be to the general Content of reaſonable Men; and that in order thereunto it is neceſſary that there ſhould be a publick Form of Worſhip; to which, if there be in it nothing that is unlawful, we ought to ſubmit: but yet I think the nature of ſuch a thing requires that it ſhould be drawn up in ſuch inoffenſive Terms, and with ſuch an entire Freedom from all manner of Ceremonies which are not abſolutely neceſſary for the Decency of the Worſhip, that no Perſon whatever ſhould have any juſt occaſion to except againſt it. I am ſatisfied, that an Uniformity wherein nothing ſinful is enjoined, is not only deſirable, but in ſome ſort neceſſary for the Well-being of the Church: Yet I think it has been a very great Miſtake which ſome high Ceremonialiſts have made, to ſtrain this matter of Uniformity of Worſhip ſo far, as to exclude every one from their Communion who cannot comply with every little Punctilio, or indifferent Ceremony. It would have conduced much more to the Peace and Tranquility of the

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Church, if all thoſe things which are not neceſſary for the Decency of the Worſhip, and are accounted by the Church to be in themſelves but indifferent, had either been wholly laid aſide, or left in their Uſe as they are pretended to be in their Nature: If this Method had been taken, I doubt not but it would have turned much to the Church's Advantage. And I think now it would tend very much to Peace, if thoſe things which are indifferent in the eyes of one Party, and ſinful in the eyes of the other, were left to every Man's Liberty to uſe or not to uſe; as alſo, that thoſe Things which are look'd upon as neceſſary by the Church-men, and as indifferent by the Diſſenters, ſhould be by theſe complied with. If Men would but once come to this Temper, the Deformity of Practice in the ſeveral Pariſhes in thoſe little Matters, which are complained of by the Diſſenters, would be unperceptible. It is the ſtretching an Uniformity too far, which has made ſuch a breach of Affection, and Deformity of Practice among us. But yet I would not ſtretch this Forbearance in things indifferent ſo far, as to lay aſide any of thoſe Ceremonies which are the neceſſary Ingredients in the Decency of our Worſhip, or expreſſive of our Reverence of the Divine Majeſty: for, as Decency and Reverence are neceſſary in our Addreſſes to an earthly King, ſo I think thoſe Civil Rites which in common expreſs our Reverence and Reſpect to thoſe, ought to be maintained and kept up, and practiſed in our Addreſſes to the King of Heaven.

2. Another thing mentioned in this Objection is, That the laying aſide the neceſſity of uſing theſe particular Ceremonies, which are excepted againſt, would deſtroy the Uniformity of our Worſhip. In Anſwer to this, I ſhall only obſerve, That if thoſe Things which are excepted againſt by the Diſſenters were altogether aboliſhed, as they may lawfully be, ſeeing they are owned by the Church-men themſelves to be but indifferent in their nature, and therefore not neceſſary; then there would be no fear that this Liberty, which is propoſed to be left to every Man to act in theſe leſſer Matters as he pleaſes, would hurt or deſtroy the Uniformity of our Worſhip. But yet tho' they ſhould not be aboliſhed, but that thoſe things ſhould be left indifferent to every Man, to uſe them or uſe them not, at his Pleaſure; I cannot ſee how this can hurt the Uniformity of our Worſhip. Uniformity doth not conſiſt in the entire Conformity of every individual Perſon or Parochial Church, to every little Rite and indifferent Ceremony uſed by ſome of the Members of the National Church in the Worſhip of God: If this were Uniformity, then all the Rites and Ceremonies, with all the ſeveral Modes of Worſhip uſed and practiſed in Cathedrals, ought to be uſed in every Country Pariſh. Now I think no body did ever ſtretch the Neceſſity of an Uniformity in Worſhip ſo far. Every Man knows, that there is a great Difference between the Cathedral and Parochial Worſhip; but yet I think very few will cenſure this Difference,

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as any Breach of the Uniformity in Worſhip required by the Law. Tho' every little Rite and Ceremony in our Worſhip ſhould not be practiſed by every Perſon in the Church's Communion, yet there would be ſuch an Uniformity as might ſatisfie every reaſonable Man, if the ſame Prayers, and the ſame Offices, were ſubmitted unto, and uſed by all in her Communion, or who do officiate as Miniſters in this Church.

3. It is farther urged in this Objection, againſt an Union, That the leaving the Ceremonies in Diſpute as indifferent in their Uſe as they are in their Nature, will neceſſarily produce Heats and Animoſities among the Members of the Church, and therefore will not produce the deſired Effects. To this I anſwer, I cannot ſee the Reaſon why the different Practices of ſome Churches in ſome leſſer Matters, ſhould be attended with Heats and Animoſities, more than the preſent Diſformity which there is between the Cathedral and Parochial Worſhip. Yet ſeeing ſome Men cannot curb their own Paſſions, it is neceſſary that a way ſhould be thought on to prevent this Inconveniency, which it is poſſible may be the Conſequent of leaving the Things in Diſpute indifferent in their Uſe. To prevent therefore all Heats and Animoſities, which may proceed from the differing Practices of the Parochial Churches in theſe leſſer Matters, I think this a very proper Expedient, *viz.* That all Perſons whatſoever ſhould be prohibited and forbid, under the ſevereſt Penalties, either by Word or Writing,

ting, directly or indirectly, to juſtifie the Uſe or condemn the Diſuſe of any of thoſe Things which ſhall be left by Law indifferent in their Uſe. I think there can be nothing more reaſonable than an Injunction of this nature; for it is unreaſonable, that thoſe who are left to their own liberty ſhould be ſuffered to concern themſelves with what another doth.

Object. 5. It may perhaps be urged againſt this Union, That the parting with the Ceremonies in Diſpute would endanger the Corruption of the Faith, in that it will neceſſarily call in queſtion an Article thereof, which doth aſſert the Church's Authority to ordain and decree Rites and Ceremonies: and that therefore it is neceſſary for the Church to maintain her Ceremonies, as a Barrier to, and Hedge about her Faith.

Reply. In this Objection there are two Things material, and fit to be conſidered: The Plea, that the parting with the Ceremonies in Diſpute will endanger the Corruption of the Faith; as alſo, that it cannot be done without calling an Article thereof in queſtion.

1. It is objected, That the parting with the Ceremonies in Diſpute will endanger the Corruption of the Faith. If I could be indeed convinced of this, I ſhould not any more plead for an Indifferency as to the Uſe of the Things in Diſpute: I would not by any means endanger the Corruption of the Faith, the preſerving of which in its Purity

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is indeed the Glory of the *Engliſh* Church. But I can ſee no Reaſon why ſome Alterations in the Ritual Part of our Worſhip ſhould endanger the Common Faith. There is a vaſt difference between an Alteration or an Abolition of a few Rites, which have no other Foundation but an Humane Inſtitution, and the altering and corrupting that Faith in any one Article thereof which is eſtabliſhed by the Authority of the Scriptures. The Ritual Worſhip, as it is eſtabliſhed by Humane Authority, may alſo be lawfully repealed by the ſame Authority: But as the received Faith of the Church is eſtabliſhed by a Divine Authority, ſo no Authority leſs than that can alter or repeal any one Article of it. I will only add this; That it doth not follow, that becauſe a lawful Authority may ſee Cauſe to alter or aboliſh ſome of thoſe Rites and Ceremonies which were at firſt inſtituted and appointed by no more than an Humane Authority, that therefore the Faith, which is eſtabliſhed by a Divine Authority, muſt neceſſarily be in danger either of a total Subverſion, or at leaſt of a very great Corruption.

2. It is urged in this Objection, That the Church cannot part with the Ceremonies in queſtion, without calling in queſtion an Article of her Faith, which aſſerts her Authority to decree Rites and Ceremonies. Some Anſwer to this was made in my Reply to the firſt Objection: There tho' the Church's Authority to ordain mixt Rites, which were neceſſarily conjoined with the matter of Wor-

ſhip, was denied; yet her Authority to ordain naked and ſimple Rites, was owned and acknowledged. This Power, I think, no reaſonable Man will deny to the Church: For if this Power be not granted to her, ſhe hath no Power or Authority at all. I cannot therefore believe, that in the general and indeterminate Senſe of the Words of that Article, any would refuſe to ſubſcribe the firſt Clauſe of the twentieth Article of the Church of *England*: And therefore I have ſometimes wonder'd, what was the Reaſon, why in the Act of Toleration the Diſſenters are excuſed from Subſcribing. I verily believe, that all ſober and moderate Diſſenters would generally Subſcribe it; and that the true Reaſon why they do except againſt ſome Ceremonies uſed in the Worſhip of our Church, is not becauſe they queſtion the Church's Power in general to ordain Rites and Ceremonies, but becauſe they are perſwaded in their own Conſciences that the Ceremonies in Diſpute are not ſuch as the Church has Authority to ordain. If the Diſſenters therefore were obliged to Subſcribe thoſe Articles, and among the reſt that in particular; I cannot ſee, tho' (to ſatisfie their Conſciences in this matter) the Church ſhould part with theſe Rites excepted againſt by their Brethren, how this can endanger either this, or any other, Article of Faith.

Object. 6. It may perhaps be urged againſt this Union, That the parting with the Things in Diſpute would be an Encouragement to Super-

Superſtition. That to aſſert Things to be unlawful, which are indifferent, becauſe enjoined by our Superiors, is as groſs Superſtition, as it is to make ſuch indifferent Things neceſſary Parts of Religion and Worſhip. That therefore tho' parting with a few indifferent Ceremonies is of no great conſequence, yet to part with the Doctrine of the Lawfulneſs of indifferent Things is of very great weight and moment.

Reply. The parting with the Things in Diſpute would not be any Encouragement to Superſtition, neither would this be to part with the Doctrine of indifferent Things being lawful when enjoined; this Doctrine might be retained notwithſtanding this. What Encouragement can this be to Superſtition, unleſs they were parted with upon the account of their being judged by the Diſſenters unlawful in their Uſe, becauſe of their Injunction? If this indeed were the Ground of the Diſſenters Refuſal to ſubmit to the Things in Diſpute, and upon this account they deſired their Abolition, there might be ſome Reaſon both for the Objection, and alſo for a Refuſal to part with them. Whatever particular Conceits ſome Men may have who may be averſe to the Uſe of any thing, tho' lawful in it ſelf, only becauſe it is enjoined, which indeed is in effect to be diſobedient to Authority only becauſe our Rulers command our Obedience; yet this is not the Caſe of all the Diſſenters, they are not all, nor yet I hope the greateſt part, of this

Mind: They do not ſcruple Conformity to the Ceremonies in Diſpute, becauſe they eſteem them unlawful only becauſe of their Injunction, tho' otherwiſe very lawful to be uſed; but becauſe they cannot think them altogether in their nature ſo agreeable to the Divine Command. And tho' all thoſe Things which are deſired to be left indifferent in their Uſe, according to the Conviction of every Man's own Conſcience, were ſo; yet it would not be any Encouragement to the ſuperſtitious Conceits of thoſe who place their Religion in refuſing to comply with indifferent Things, only becauſe they are enjoined: for the Reaſon of the Church's parting with them, is not becauſe they are indifferent, but becauſe they are adjudged by the Diſſenters to be ſinful, tho' upon what Grounds they adjudge them ſo, is beſt known to themſelves. I ſhall only add, That tho' the Church, to ſatisfie the tender Conſciences of their Brethren, ſhould part with the controverted Ceremonies; that yet the Doctrine of the Lawfulneſs of the Uſe of indifferent Things when enjoined, would not be parted with: for ſtill there would be many Things in her Worſhip and Diſcipline enjoined her Members, indifferent in their own nature, which would remain as Inſtances of the Church's Power in that reſpect. And tho' all that can by modeſt and reaſonable Men be demanded, ſhould be granted; yet not one, whoſe Mind is intoxicated with that wild Conceit, could conform themſelves to the Church's Government: ſo that no Danger can ariſe from this Union on this account.

Object.

Object. 7. Some perhaps may object againſt this Union, That it will be in vain to attempt an Union, unleſs the Church of *England* will be perſwaded to lay aſide her Epiſcopal Government, which has (as theſe ſuppoſe) no Foundation or Warrant in Scripture, but is only a Remain of the Popiſh Hierarchy, which ought to be aboliſhed in all Churches which pretend to be Reformed; and that until this be done, they cannot think of an Union with the Church of *England*.

Reply. I doubt not, but that there are ſome ſuch Zealots among the Diſſenters, who are ſo prejudiced againſt a Dioceſan Epiſcopacy, and ſo fond of their own Opinions as to Church Government, that they cannot believe any thing to have any Warrant from Scripture, which they have not a Fancy for. As an Union with theſe Bigots is not to be expected, ſo neither is it deſirable: for tho' I could wiſh that the Church of *England* would part with what is indifferent, to ſatisfie tender Conſciences; yet I can never deſire that ſhe ſhould ſacrifice her Government to the Demands of unreaſonable Men. For every unprejudiced Perſon will be ſatisfied, that what is offered againſt an Union in this Objection is very unreaſonable, if the Truth of theſe two things are made appear, *viz.* 1. That tho' it is in the Word of God required that there ſhould be Order and Government in the Church, yet that God has no where injoin'd any particular Form of Government, to be practized and ſubmitted unto

to by every Church: As alſo that the preſent Government of the Church of *England*, as to the Eſſentials of her Hierarchy, doth agree with the Government of the Primitive Church.

1. Tho' it is required in the Word of God, That there ſhould be Order and Government in his Church; yet He has no where therein injoin'd his Church to ſubmit univerſally to any one ſpecial Form of Government, excluſive of all others. It is abſolutely neceſſary to prevent Confuſions and Diſorders in the Church, that there ſhould be ſome Order and Government maintained and practiced in his Church, who is the God of Order, and not of Confuſion; and therefore He has commanded, that all things therein ſhould be done decently and in order: For the better fulfilling of which Apoſtolical Canon, He has laid down General Directions, how both the Officers and Members of the Church are to be qualified, as alſo how they ought to behave themſelves. But as to the particular kind of Government to be exerciſed in the Church, he ſeems to be in his Word altogether ſilent, leaving it to the ſeveral Churches, to practice that particular kind of Government, which may be found to be moſt agreeable to the particular and ſpecial Circumſtances of the ſeveral Churches. Therefore ſeeing that this is one of thoſe things, which, tho' it is in general commanded that it ſhould be, is yet, as to the ſpecial kind thereof, left to the particular Determination and Choice of every Church;

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as alſo that a Dioceſan Epiſcopacy has not only been of a long ſtanding among us, but even from the firſt Plantation of Chriſtianity in *England*: As alſo, that it has, and is ſtill found to be the moſt agreeable and convenient Government for the *Engliſh* Church; it is unreaſonable to require, or expect, that ſhe ſhould change or alter it.

2. The preſent Government of the *Engliſh* Church doth, as to the Eſſentials of her Hierarchy, agree with the Practice of the Primitive Church. Tho' there are ſome things in the Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline and Government, which many of her Members would rejoyce to ſee a Regulation of; yet as to the Eſſentials of that Hierarchy, it muſt be acknowledged, by any that is at all acquainted with Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that there is a very great Agreement between the Ancient Diſcipline in the Apoſtolick Ages of the Church, and the Modern Government of the Church of *England*. To manifeſt this Conformity between the Government of the Catholick Church in the Apoſtolick Ages of the World, and the Modern Government of the Church of *England*, more convincingly, I ſhall look into the Government then exerciſed in the Church, and compare the preſent Government of the *Engliſh* Church therewith. Beſides the many ſubaltern Offices in the Primitive Church, which (the uſe of them being perverted by the *Romiſh* Church from the firſt Deſign of their Inſtitution) are now aboliſhed by the Reformed, there were three Principal Offices in the Church at that time,

Biſhops,

Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons. To theſe, Men qualified for them, were, by Faſting, and Prayer, and Impoſition of Hands, in a very ſolemn manner ordained. The Deacons (to mention the Duties of their Function in the firſt place) were an inferiour Order of Miniſters in the Primitive Church, who were ordained to Preaching the Goſpel, and had a Power alſo to Baptize, beyond which their Authority did not extend in Eccleſiaſtical Matters: for as to the Sacrament of the Supper, they were allowed to do no more than aſſiſt the Biſhop or Presbyter in the Celebration thereof, by delivering the Elements to the People. The next Order to theſe, were the Presbyters; Theſe were ordained to the Celebration of all the ſeveral Services of the Miniſtry, and who therefore had a Right, not only with the Deacons to Preach and Baptize, but alſo to Adminiſter the Sacrament of the Supper in the Biſhop's abſence: There were ſeveral of either of theſe Orders in moſt Churches. The higheſt Office in the Church was the Biſhop, who preſided over all the reſt. Whether this Office in the Church was of a Divine Inſtitution, or whether he were no more than a Presbyter, choſen to that Precedency over his Fellow-Presbyters by the conſent and Suffrage of the Presbyters of that Church, over which he preſided, as it is a Doubt which cannot be eaſily reſolv'd; ſo this is certain, that he had the Precedency and chief Rule in that Church where he was Biſhop. Now if we compare the Government of the Church of

England

England at preſent, with the Ancient Government of the Catholick Church in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, we ſhall ſee a very great Agreement between them. In the Church of *England* there are Deacons appointed to the very ſame Work, which the Deacons of Old were imployed in; our Deacons are allowed to perform no other Miniſterial Function, but Preaching and Baptizing, and delivering the Elements at the Lord's Supper. In the Church of *England* there are alſo Presbyters, authorized to diſcharge all the Duties of the Paſtoral Office, as thoſe of the Ancient Church were. And over both theſe Biſhops preſides, as the chief Rulers in their reſpective Sees. There is alſo this Agreement between the Primitive Church formerly, and the Church of *England* now, That as all thoſe ſeveral Offices were then executed, not by Laymen, but by certain Perſons ſolemnly ordained thereunto; ſo in the *Engliſh* Church now, all thoſe who execute the Office of a Biſhop, Prieſt, or Deacon, muſt be in Orders. This is ſuch an Agreement in Government with the Primitive Church, as is not to be found in any other Form of Church-Government whatſoever. In the Presbyterian Model of Government, there is but one of theſe three Offies, *viz.* Biſhops or Presbyters, which you will call them. And tho' in the Independent Model there are three diſtinct Eccleſiaſtical Offices; yet two of them, contrary to the Practice of all Antiquity, are born and executed by Laymen. I ſhall only add one thing more, That

as then all the Power of Legiſlature to which the Church pretends, was lodged in their Synods, who had the Authority of making Canons and Conſtitutions, for the better management of the ſeveral Churches, as alſo of determining all Doubts and Controverſies in Matters of Faith; ſo now all the Power, to which the Church pretends of that nature, is lodged in this Church in her National and Provincial Convocations. The great Difference therefore between the Diſcipline of the Ancient Church, and the Modern Government of the *Engliſh* Church, ſeems to lie here: In the Primitive Church the Presbyters had no ſettled Cure, but were ſent by the Biſhop to preach and exerciſe their Miniſtry, where there was the greateſt hopes of propagating the Goſpel; whereas now, ſince the general Converſion of the Nation, and the Endowment of Parochial Churches by the pious Munificence of Lay-Patrons, the Presbyters in the Church have fix'd and certain Cures. This is ſo far from being any Corruption, that it is a very great Advantage, both to the Church, and her Officers, to have them ſo very well provided for in their reſpective Cures; and that their Condition of Life is now abundantly more fixed, than when obliged to go from place to place, as the Biſhop ſaw occaſion. In the Ancient Church alſo, the Right of Electing to any Eccleſiaſtical Office, ſeems to have been veſted in the People, by whoſe Suffrage thoſe who were advanced in the Church were choſen; whereas now the right of preſenting

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to Eccleſiaſtical Cures is lodg'd in the Hands of the Lay-patrons. It is difficult indeed to give any certain Account how this Right came to be transferred from the People to the Patron, tho' I look upon this as a probable Account thereof. When the Churches were, upon the general Converſion of the Kingdom, founded and endowed by the pious Munificence of the ſeveral Lords of Mannors, who erected and endowed Parochial Churches for the uſe of themſelves and Tenants in their reſpective Royalties, they did (as eſteeming it equal that thoſe, at whoſe charge the Miniſter was maintained, ſhould chuſe him) reſerve the Right of Electing and Preſenting a Miniſter, to ſerve in their own Church, to themſelves and their Heirs. As this ſeems to have been the Original of the Patron's right of Preſentation, ſo that it is thus, is many times of advantage to the Church: For if the Vulgar were now to elect their own Miniſters, ſuch is the Corruption of Mens Minds and Manners, that we have juſt ground to fear they would not always make the beſt choice for themſelves. But yet I could heartily wiſh that there were a Mean found out to preſerve the Patron's Right, and ſo far to reſtore the Primitive Practice, that Miniſters might not be thruſt upon Pariſhes againſt their own Conſent. There ſeems alſo to ſome to be another difference between the Ancient and Modern Diſcipline of the Church, which is this; The Extent of the Biſhop's Juriſdiction ſeems then not to have been near ſo large as now. About this there have been various Opinions;

Opinions; and after all that has been ſaid by the one ſide, or the other, it remains doubtful, whether at firſt the Limits of their Juriſdiction were confined within the compaſs of one ſingle Congregation, or no. There are many Expreſſions in Antiquity, that would induce us to believe that it was; tho' the Numbers of Subaltern Officers, in ſome Churches eſpecially, do render it very probable, that their Juriſdiction did extend to more Societies of Chriſtians, than one. In this uncertainty, it is poſſible that the Biſhop's Juriſdiction anciently was not, on the one hand, ſo narrow as ſome would make it; nor yet, on the other hand, ſo wide as others. And it ſeems now to be ſome diſadvantage to the *Engliſh* Church, that ſome of the Sees are ſo very large, that it is very difficult for any one Man to diſcharge his Epiſcopal Charge as he ought to do. It were therefore to be wiſh'd, That the Extent of every Dioceſs were reduced to ſuch a Proportion, that at leaſt every County in *England* might have its own Biſhop. But yet, tho' this is a very great diſadvantage to the Church, and renders the Epiſcopal Office too great a Burden for one Man's Shoulders; it is but an accidental Diſformity at moſt, which there is in this reſpect between the Ancient and Modern Government of the Church. And this Diſformity will appear yet leſs, if we conſider, that the Extent of the Epiſcopal Juriſdiction as to place, is no where limited in Scripture; as alſo how uncertain we are, what was the Extent of the Ancient Dioceſes.

Dioceſes. There are indeed ſome other Corruptions crept into the Government of the *Engliſh* Church, which are neceſſary to be amended; but yet there is nothing in that Hierarchy, which can cauſe any Man, that conſiders the Government of the Primitive Church, and how near ours doth agree thereunto, to wiſh for, or deſire its Aboliſhment and Extirpation. For that it is the Government of the Church of *Rome*, is no Argument at all for its being laid aſide by us; for tho' we ought to reject all the Corruptions of that Church, yet for the ſake of Theſe we ought not to reject thoſe things which are agreeable to Scripture and Antiquity, tho' they are practiſed by thoſe of that Communion. To conclude therefore, as I can ſee no Reaſon why any ſhould deſire the Extirpation of Dioceſan Epiſcopacy in *England*; ſo I think it unreaſonable to demand the Alteration of that Government, which has been ſo long practiſed in the *Engliſh* Church.

Object. 8 It may perhaps be objected by ſome againſt an Union, That it will be in vain to make any Propoſals for an Union, unleſs, as a Preliminary thereunto, the Church of *England* will promiſe not to require the uſe of her Liturgy; for as much as they look upon it unlawful to impoſe any Form of Prayer to be uſed univerſally, by thoſe who do officiate as Miniſters in the Church; That they believe that the Impoſition of theſe, and the tying up every Miniſter to a preſcrib'd Form of Words, from which they muſt not vary, is a Vio-

lation of Christian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Use and Improvement of those Gifts and Talents, which God has given Ministers for the Edification of the Church.

Reply. The Substance of what is alledg'd against an Union in this Objection, is this; That tho' it be lawful to use a prescrib'd Form of Prayer, yet it is unlawful to impose one, for that such an Imposition is a Violation of our Christian Liberty, and a hindrance of the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. The manifesting Two things, will answer the Objection fully, *viz.* That the requiring the Use of a Publick Form of Worship, is no Violation at all of Christian Liberty, or Hindrance of the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. As also, That tho' there are some things in the Publick Prayers of the Church, the Amendment whereof many sober and pious Men wish for; yet as to the Substance thereof it is excellently fitted and adapted for publick Use.

1. The requiring the Use of a Publick Form of Worship is no Violation of Christian Liberty, or Hindrance to the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. That the Use of Set Forms is lawful, is acknowledged by most; tho' if it were denyed, the Publick Liturgies of several of the Ancient Churches, which no doubt were designed for the Use of them, do evidence that they were used very early in several of the *Eastern* Churches. We have the Remains of several of them, tho' much corrupted by the Church of *Rome*, to this Day.

Day. Neither is it any Argument againſt the Antiquity of thoſe Liturgies, or their being uſed by the Churches whoſe Name they bear, that they are ſo groſly interpolated by the Church of *Rome*: This is indeed an Argument of their being corrupted, but not that they are wholly ſpurious. The great thing therefore objected as to theſe publick Forms, is not againſt the lawfulneſs of their Uſe, but of their Impoſition; for it is urged by theſe Men, that the Church has no Authority to impoſe any Set Forms, to be univerſally uſed by her Miniſters; That this is a Violation of Chriſtian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Improvement of our Miniſterial Talents. I confeſs, if the Liturgy were ſo far impoſed, as that we were forbid to pray at all in any other Words, we might then indeed object againſt the Impoſition thereof as a Violation of Chriſtian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Improvement of our Miniſterial Talents: But ſeeing we are not forbid to pray for the Supply of the Wants either of our ſelves, or of that particular place where we are called to Miniſter in Holy things, in Words and Expreſſions adapted and ſuited to our, or their, preſent Circumſtances, I cannot ſee where the Strength and Conſequence of the Objection lies: Tho' we are enjoined to offer up the Publick Requeſts of the Church in Words injoined and required by her Governours; if there be nothing ſinful in the Forms preſcribed, I know not where the unlawfulneſs of their Preſcription lies; neither can I ſee how it can be any Barr

to Chriſtian Liberty, tho' they are impoſed by the Church. I ſhall only add one thing more, That as Prayer is an asking of God the Mercies we ſtand in need of; ſo it is but reaſonable, that thoſe publick Mercies which we all ſtand in need of, every where and at all times, ſhould be petitioned for by all in the ſame Words.

2. Tho' there are ſome things in the Liturgy, for the Amendment of which many pious and ſober Men wiſh; yet as to the Subſtance thereof it is excellently fitted for the publick Uſe of the Church. And tho' ſome things therein may be liable to Exception, yet it muſt be acknowledged by unprejudic'd Perſons, that it equals, if not excells, every thing of this nature in the World; neither do I think, whatever particular Defects it may have, that any Publick Form of Prayer in any Church whatever, excells the Publick Prayers of the Church of *England*, for its Pithineſs, Comprehenſiveneſs, and Copiouſneſs of Expreſſion. How full and and affectionate are its Petitions! How comprehenſive, but copious is the Senſe, and how natural and ſmooth are the Expreſſions thereof! In this excellent Liturgy, the Supply of all the Publick Neceſſities of the Church in general, and of her Members in particular, are in very copious, but comprehenſive Terms pray'd for. And [that which adds a yet greater value unto it,] theſe things are asked in Words, not only expreſſive of the Things prayed for, but adapted alſo to excite, raiſe, and engage the Affections of the humble Suppliant. In a word,

a word, there is one continued Vein of humble Devotions, and pious Affections, that runs thro' the whole thereof. Thus much I have presumed to affirm concerning its Excellency and Usefulness, tho' to give a just and true account thereof, must be the Work of an abler Pen than mine.

Object. 9. It may perhaps be objected by some against this Union, That tho' the Church should grant all that some very Moderate Dissenters may require, that then the Constitution of the Church will not please every Body, but will be still liable to Exceptions; and that therefore it is better that things should continue as they are, seeing that this Complyance of the Church will not heal the Breach, but only divide the Dissenters, and weaken their Interest by drawing over some of their Members to the Communion of the Church.

Reply. There are three things in this Objection, which I shall consider, *namely*, That if those things which are excepted against, should be abolish'd, or left indifferent, that yet the Churches Constitution would not please every body, but would still be liable to Exceptions; *as also*, that this Complyance of the Church would not heal the Breach, but only weaken the Interest of the Dissenters, by drawing some of their Members over to the Communion of the Church of *England*.

1. It is urged as a Plea against this Union,

That if the Church were brought to ſuch a Temper, as to aboliſh, or at leaſt to leave the Rites excepted againſt as indifferent in their Uſe, as they are in their Nature, that yet this would not pleaſe and ſatisfie every Man, but ſome would ſtill be diſcontented. In anſwer to this, I grant, That it is impoſſible, by the utmoſt Endeavours of pious and peaceable Men, to pleaſe all Men. The Deſign therefore of preſſing this Matter upon the Church, is not with any hopes of pleaſing all Men: For I am ſatisfied, that there are many Men, who are reſolved not to be ſatisfied; whoſe Separation from the Church, as it is not grounded upon any Pretence of Reaſon, ſo they will never be ſatisfied, or by any Reaſons prevailed with to return to an Union and Communion with her. Some of the Diſſenters are poſſeſſed with ſuch a Spirit of Contradiction, that it is impoſſible to ſatisfie them by the utmoſt Endeavours of reaſonable Men. It is not the Satisfaction of theſe Men, who are reſolved to be troubleſome, that I am labouring to procure, neither do I endeavour after an Union with theſe, for this were to ſtrive at Impoſſibilities. My great Deſign therefore in thus earneſtly perſwading the Church to ſeek an Union with her Diſſenting Brethren, at the Expence of indifferent Rites, which are not abſolutely neceſſary for the Decency of the Worſhip, is (if poſſible) to bring things to ſuch a temper, that the reaſonable and modeſt Diſſenters may have Satisfaction, and that the reſt may be left inexcuſable: For this muſt

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and will be the Conſequence of the Church's Clemency. The Reaſonable Men among the Diſſenters will return to the Communion of the Church, and the Separation of the reſt will then appear, when that their Pretences of ſeparating are taken away, more evidently to be the Effect, not of a tender Conſcience, but perverſe Obſtinacy. By this Inſtance of Clemency and Condeſcenſion to her weak Brethren, the Reputation of the Church will be advanced, and the Credit of her obſtinate and rebellious Sons will be greatly leſſened.

2. It is farther objected, That tho' thoſe Things which are excepted againſt were leſt indifferent, the Church would ſtill be liable to Exceptions. I grant it; for it is impoſſible that in this imperfect State the Conſtitution of the Church ſhould ever be reduced to ſuch a State of ſinleſs Perfection, as to be wholly without ſpot or blemiſh. Tho' if this were not only poſſible, but actually ſo, yet then the Church would not be ſafe from the Cavils and Exceptions of unreaſonable Men: For, if the innocent Life of our dear Redeemer was not free from the Reproaches of his Enemies, tho' his Life were a Pattern of Perfect and Celeſtial Holineſs; much leſs can we think or expect, that the Church, tho' her Conſtitution were never ſo pure, and free from Sin, ſhould be exempted from being liable to the Exceptions of ſuch as theſe. It is the peculiar Immunity and Happineſs of the Church triumphant in Heaven, to be both ſinleſs and undeſerving Reproach her ſelf,

and alſo to be ſafe from all the Exceptions here made againſt her. Unleſs, therefore, we could either hope that it were poſſible for the Church Militant here on Earth to be capable of a Community of Privileges with the Church triumphant in Heaven, by being, as That is, exempted and freed from all manner of Sin, and every Blemiſh; or that the ſame Spirit of Love and Charity which poſſeſſes and reigns in the Breaſt of every glorious Angel and holy Soul in Heaven, would ſubdue and captivate the Spirit of every turbulent and unquiet Perſon on Earth; it is not to be hoped that the Church will be ſecure from the Slanders and Exceptions of thoſe whoſe Delight it is to find fault with, and ſpeak evil of things they know not. That a Church is liable to Exceptions, is not a juſtifiable Cauſe of Separation from her, unleſs that we our ſelves have any juſt matter of Exception againſt her. Farther, No Exceptions againſt a Church are juſtifiable, unleſs the Things excepted againſt can be proved by us to be, from the expreſs Warrant of the Scriptures, unlawful: This nothing can ever be proved to be, if it be not againſt that Word of Truth which is the compleat Rule of Faith and Obedience. For if a Church's being liable to Exception be any juſtifiable Warrant to withdraw our ſelves from her Communion, then we muſt have Communion with no Church on Earth: For, What Church is there which is not liable to Exceptions? This ſhould ſatisfie every reaſonable Man, that if he is convinced in his own Mind that there

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is nothing ſinful, which he is obliged to do as a Member of that Church, with whom he is in Communion; no pretence of ſome things being inexpedient or unneceſſary therein, can juſtifie his Separation from it. For, as an Excellent Divine well obſerves, Not Things Expedient or Inexpedient, but Lawful or Unlawful, ought to be the Meaſure of our Obedience.

3. It is urged, That this Condeſcenſion of the Church, in leaving the Things which are excepted againſt indifferent, will not heal the Breach, but only leſſen it, by drawing off many of the Diſſenters from that Intereſt. I confeſs, that I do not believe or expect, that this Condeſcenſion on the Church's part will altogether heal the Breach: for I am perſwaded that there is a Generation of Men in the World, whoſe Intereſt it is to embroil the Church, and heighten our Differences. There are others who are poſſeſſed with a Spirit of Oppoſition, whoſe Delight therefore it is to fiſh in troubled Waters. There are others, whoſe Prejudices are ſo great, that they cannot be eaſily (at leaſt preſently) ſurmounted. All theſe are, and will be, averſe to any Union. Therefore tho' I cannot hope, that by this means the Breach will be quite healed; yet I am perſwaded, if the Church would but come to any Temper as to theſe Matters in Diſpute, that the Wound, which is now very great, would be very much leſſened. By this means, tho' not all, yet very many of the Diſſenters, and [which is moſt deſirable] the moſt learned and conſiderable

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Perſons of that Party, would be brought over to the Intereſt of the Church. By the Acceſſion of theſe to her Intereſt, the Church would not only receive a very great addition to her Strength; but the Diſſenting Intereſt, which is now very ſtrong, would in all probability be thereby terribly ſhattered. And That Intereſt grows ſo ſtrong, and the Numbers of thoſe who withdraw their Communion from Her are ſo many, that I think it highly concerns the Church to conſider of ſome Methods to weaken the one, and leſſen the other.

Object. 10. It may farther be objected, That an Union between the Church-men and the reaſonable Diſſenters would be ſo far from being an Advantage to, or the Intereſt of the Nation, that it would be very dangerous, if not deſtructive, to the Civil Government of it. This (ſome may ſay) would remove the preſent Ballance, on which the Security of the State doth depend; And that, as it is the Honour of His Majeſty to hold the Ballance of *Europe*, by maintaining an *Æquilibrium* among the ſeveral States thereof; ſo alſo the ſame Policy requires, that at home the Ballance between the Church and State ſhould be kept ſo ſteady, that the Civil Government be not overtop'd by the Eccleſiaſtical Power; and that this would be the certain Conſequence of ſuch an Union. Who would (may theſe Men ſay) have deſired that *Spain* ſhould ever have fallen under the Dominion, and into the Intereſt of *France*, for

for the ſake of the ſpecious Name of Unity? In like manner, if the Church were rendred ſtrong by the Re-union of the Diſſenters thereunto, it would again overtop the State, and we ſhould be, as in the Times of Popery, again Prieſt-ridden, and enſlaved to the imperious Humours of the Clergy.

Reply. The Strength of the Objection lies here, That an Union between the Churchmen and the modeſt Diſſenters, will be a Detriment to the Civil Government, in that it will remove the preſent Ballance between the Church and State, the Removal whereof will be prejudicial to the latter; and that therefore, to prevent any Inconveniency which may accrue to the State by a Removal of the preſent Ballance, it is neceſſary to keep up the preſent Diviſions in the Church; leſt being united within her ſelf, the preſent Ballance ſhould be loſt; and the Church, grown potent by the Re-union of the Diſſenters to her, ſhould overtop the Civil State, to the great Damage of the Kingdom. Theſe are the Maxims upon which (it is feared) ſome deſigning Politicians, who are more concerned, if not for their own Intereſt, yet at leaſt for the Welfare of the State, than of the Church, do go: They think that the Eccleſiaſtical and Civil State are ſo contrary and oppoſite, that they cannot ſubſiſt together; and that therefore the State cannot proſper, unleſs the Church be oppreſſed and divided. To cut the Sinews off, and give a full Anſwer to this Objection, it is neceſſary to evidence both

both the Impiety and Folly of this pretended Policy.

1. This is an impious and ſinful Policy. Such indeed is the Wickedneſs and Impiety thereof, that every good Man ought to abhor and deteſt it. Thoſe certainly who oppoſe an Union among Proteſtants upon this account, whatever Profeſſion of Religion they may make, do not herein act either as Chriſtians or Proteſtants. The Maxim upon which all their Policy is built, is the higheſt and moſt impious Reflection which Men can poſſibly caſt upon the Saviour of the World and his Apoſtles, who are the Authors of all that Power the Church is entruſted with. The Maxim upon which the whole Scheme of their Policy is laid, is this, That the Eccleſiaſtical and Civil Power are contrary to each other, and that therefore the Encreaſe of the one muſt neceſſarily be the Diminution of the other. This Maxim is both falſe in it ſelf, and a profane Reflection upon Chriſt and his Apoſtles. To aſſert this, is to profeſs that they believe, Chriſt and his Apoſtles came, in the literal ſenſe of the Words, to ſend a Sword upon the Earth, to diſturb the Peace of the World, and deſtroy its Order, by ſetting up a Power in the Church deſtructive to Civil Government: This is ſuch a Reflection upon Chriſt, the Author of our Holy Religion, and ſo contrary to his Deſign who has made Obedience to Magiſtrates one great Branch and Duty of Religion, that a good Man cannot but reject it with Indignation.

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2. Thoſe who are influenced by ſuch Political Conſiderations as theſe, to hinder and oppoſe an Union between the Church-men and the Diſſenters, are guilty of as much Folly as Impiety: As therefore good Men will reject their Policy for its Impiety, ſo a wiſe Man will explode it for its Folly. The Folly of this pretended Policy is demonſtrable in theſe two Particulars:

1. A Comprehenſion will not remove the preſent Ballance between the Church and State, as is pretended, and therefore can be no Detriment to the Civil Power. Methinks I would charitably hope that there are none, eſpecially among our Rulers, who are acted by Politicks, which cannot be urged without Impiety, or practiſed without Folly; but yet if this be really an Objection with any againſt a Comprehenſion, it muſt have received its Original and Riſe from the ill Uſe the Church-men (as Hiſtory informs us) made of their Power, when it was fully in their Hands, by their conſtant Encroachments upon the Rights of the Civil State. It is confeſt, the Miſimprovements of the Eccleſiaſtical Power, and the imperious Carriage of the Clergy, even to Crowned Heads, in the Times of Popery, when the Clergy with an uncontrouled Sway domineered over the Conſciences of Men, may juſtly make us afraid of falling any more under their Dominion and Tyranny: But yet, tho' we have juſt Cauſe to be afraid of the Tyranny of the Popiſh Clergy, we have no reaſon to fear a Comprehenſion; for it is a great Miſtake in any

any to apprehend, that this will remove the preſent Ballance, which only can be pretended as a Reaſon of the Danger which theſe apprehend may accrue to the State from this Union. If indeed by this Union the Church's Power and Authority would be enlarged, or her Wealth encreaſed, there might be ſome Ground for theſe Fears, and conſequently ſome Reaſon for this Objection. But if by a Comprehenſion, tho' the Terms of Communion would be ſomewhat enlarged, and her Members thereby become (we hope) more numerous, there would yet be no encreaſe of her Power and Authority, as diſtinct from the Civil State; the Ballance would ſtill continue as it is betwixt the Church and State, and no Danger would ariſe upon that account to the State from a Comprehenſion. I cannot therefore but obſerve, that the Inſtance alledged in the Objection will not anſwer the End for which it is brought: For *France*, and the other States of *Europe*, have contrary Intereſts, and are oppoſite each to other; and therefore the Enlargement of the Power of *France* muſt be a leſſening to that of the neighbouring States: But the Church and State are not thus contrary each to other; but their Intereſts are interwoven, ſo that the Proſperity of the one is the Advantage of the other. Add to this, That by the Addition of *Spain* to *France*, there would not only be an Enlargement of her Dominions, but alſo an Encreaſe of her Power; which being already ſo great as to make her formidable to the neighbouring States, it is their

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Intereſt to prevent this Union: But this cannot be pleaded by any againſt a Comprehenſion; for neither is the Church's Power at preſent formidable to the State, nor yet would it by the Re-union of the Diſſenters to her be made ſo, in that by this Union her Authority would not be at all increaſed. To conclude this Argument, As it is the Honour of His Majeſty, by holding the Scale of *Europe* in his Hand, to maintain and preſerve the preſent Peace inviolable; ſo it will be the immortal Honour of His Majeſty, and thoſe worthy Patriots of their Country whoſe Province it is to engage in this great and weighty Enterprize, to reſtore in ſome meaſure the Peace of our *Engliſh Iſrael*, which has been a great while torn and rent by inteſtine Diviſions about Matters of very little moment. The Accompliſhment of this great Work will for ever redound to the Honour of thoſe who ſhall be the happy Inſtruments of effecting it; and the Advantages accruing, not only to the preſent, but to ſucceeding Ages alſo from it, will be ſo great, that the Generations to come will riſe up and call them *Bleſſed*.

2. An Union between the Church-men and Diſſenters, would greatly ſtrengthen the Civil State. So far would a Comprehenſion be from being dangerous or deſtructive to the Government of the Nation, that it would on the contrary be a very great Advantage to it: for nothing can ſtrengthen the Civil State like an Union in the Church. By this means thoſe Factions which divide the State, and ariſe from the Differences in Religion, would

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be extinguiſhed, and the Power of Religion would get ground in the Hearts of Men; than which nothing can tend more to the Safety of the Civil Government. Nothing can be a ſtronger Tye upon Men to obey the Civil Power, than the Obligation of Conſcience; nothing can influence the Conſciences of Men like the powerful Influences of that Religion which teaches Men for Conſcience ſake to be ſubject to the Higher Powers, as Miniſters of God to them for good. Whatever therefore advances the Life and Power of the true Religion in a Kingdom, doth very much advance the Security of the Civil State. For if there be nothing elſe but the Ties of Intereſt or Fear, without any inward Principle of Religion, to keep Men within the Bounds of their Duty to the Civil Powers, the Government will ſtand upon a very uncertain Foundation; and will be continually in danger of being overturned, when either the Intereſts of Men change, or the Grounds of Fear, whereby Men of factious Spirits are contained within the Bounds of their Duty, by the encreaſe of their Power are taken away. Hence is it, that he who converſes with Books will find, that the Declenſion of the Power of Religion in a Kingdom, has uſually been a ſad Preſage of the Deſtruction of the Civil State. To wind up this Argument, If nothing can be ſo great a Security and Support to the Civil State, as the Power of Religion, and nothing can advance the Life and Power of Religion ſo much as an Union among the Profeſſors of it;

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then an Union between the Church-men and the Reasonable and Modest Dissenters, would be so far from being dangerous to, that on the contrary, it would be the Security of the Civil State. I shall add no more, but only observe, That as it is the Interest of the Kingdom, that Religion and Unity should be promoted; so those Politicians who oppose and are afraid of an Union among us, as dangerous to the Government, are very much mistaken.

Thus have I impartially given the Reasons why an Union betwixt the Church of *England* and the Reasonable Dissenters, is very desirable, and ought to be endeavoured after by all who have any regard either to the Welfare of Religion or their Country. I have also impartially, and without Prejudice, considered what is, or may (with any colour of Reason) be objected against it. I proceed now to propose some Methods, which (with Submission to better Judgments) I believe would very much contribute to the effecting and accomplishing of this good and great Work; and which (if they were but put in execution) would (I believe) very much advance the Honour and Interest of the *English* Church. I shall only add this, That as the Danger of the Protestant Religion, from the restless Endeavours of the Papists from without, and her intestine Divisions from within, which are of so much Advantage to the Papists, put me at first upon this Work; so the following Proposals were (without

any regard to the particular and private Intereſt of any Party of Proteſtants) calculated by the Author of them, to promote and advance the Honour of Religion, the Intereſt of the Church, and the Welfare and Advantage of the Kingdom.

Propoſal 1. *That no Miniſter, who has one Living with Cure of Souls worth* 60 l. per An. *real Value, or that Sum coming in yearly by or from any Eſtate Eccleſiaſtical or Temporal, together with a Living with Cure of Souls of any Value whatever, ſhall be capable of taking another Benefice with Cure of Souls, without a Reſignation of his firſt Living or Benefice. And to prevent Fraud in this matter, it is farther propoſed, That all Faculties be nulled and void. It is farther propoſed, That if any Perſon, having a Living with Cure of Souls under the Value aforeſaid, ſhall afterward be preferred to another Living with Cure of Souls above that Value, he be obliged to reſign the former Living. It is farther propoſed, That where any Perſon ſhall have two Livings, they ſhall lie ſo near, that he may perſonally ſupply them both. As alſo, That no Incumbent, or Miniſter in any Market Town, ſhall be capable of any other Living, without a Reſignation of that.*

This Article is levelled againſt all Pluralities, where the Smallneſs of the Maintenance doth not make it abſolutely neceſſary. Pluralities have with great reaſon been, in all Churches whatever, reckoned a very great Corruption; and therefore ought to be abo-

liſhed,

liſhed, as much as poſſible, in a Church that pretends to be Reformed. There have been many Canons of Councils, and ſome Laws made by Parliaments, againſt this Corruption: but notwithſtanding theſe, there are ſtill ſhameful Inſtances of the Avarice of many Clergy-men in this reſpect. Pluralities are a general Detriment to Religion; for when Men ſee their Miniſters heaping up of Preferments, they are tempted to believe that there is no ſuch thing as Religion in the World, and that the Miniſtry is only a ſecular Trade and Employment whereby Learned Men get Riches and Eſtates for themſelves and their Children; and not a Sacred Function, inſtituted and appointed for the Good and Advantage of the People. Some Pariſhes indeed are ſo ill provided of a Maintenance for their Miniſters, that, without the Addition of another Cure, they cannot ſubſiſt: It were indeed to be wiſhed that this Evil were removed, and that the ſmall Livings were either by Law, or by the pious Munificence of well diſpoſed Perſons, augmented to ſuch a Proportion, that every Pariſh might be able to maintain its own Miniſter; but until this be done, it is neceſſary that in ſome caſes Pluralities ſhould be allowed. But however, ſeeing the very End and Deſign of endowing Parochial Churches was the more conſtant and regular Supply of the ſeveral Pariſhes; it is reaſonable that thoſe Pariſhes which have a competent Maintenance for a Miniſter, ſhould have their own Incumbents to officiate duely and conſtantly

among them. But yet, tho' by this Article I would reſtrain Pluralities with Cure of Souls, yet I would not put a Bar to any deſerving Perſon's receiving Advantage from thoſe Dignities which the Church has to diſpoſe of for the Encouragement of Learning and Piety, and to which there is no Cure of Souls annexed; theſe may be enjoyed by any who have the Cure of Souls already committed unto them, in that they do not interfere with their preſent Charge.

Prop 2. *That every Miniſter do reſide upon his Benefice, except ſuch as have two Livings; in which caſe it ſhall be ſufficient that the Miniſter do reſide upon one of them.*

Non-Reſidence is another Corruption in the Church, which is the neceſſary Effect and Conſequence of Pluralities: For if a Miniſter have more than one Living, he muſt neceſſarily be for allowing Non-Reſidence; becauſe it is impoſſible that he who has two Livings ſhould reſide upon both. The rooting out therefore one of theſe Evils, will be a great ſtep to the rooting out the other. It is a horrible Shame, that ſome of the beſt Livings in *England*, for Maintenance, are neglected by their Miniſters, who hardly ever come at them, except it be to receive their Rents; as tho' there were no Proviſion for a Miniſter upon the place. This is not only a groſs Neglect of their Duty, who are obliged by their Functions to take care of the Souls of thoſe over whom they are ſet by the Providence

vidence of God in Spiritual things; but it is a Detriment to the Poor; for Miniſters ought to ſet a good Example to their Flocks, and to uſe Hoſpitality and Charity to the Poor. But how can either of theſe be done by thoſe Miniſters, who hardly ever come at their Cure? It is an Obſervation, that (as the late Biſhop of *Worceſter* tells us) is made by the Canoniſt, *That there is no Command for Reſidence in Scripture, becauſe the Nature of the Duty requires it.* Did Men but conſider the End of their Miniſtry, and the Nature of that holy Office which they bear, they would not be ſo careful of the Fleece, and ſo negligent of the Flock, as they generally are. No wonder that there is ſo little ſerious Religion among us, when by many Paſtours there is ſo very little care taken to inſtruct or teach their People better by their own Examples.

Prop 3. *That for the better Sanctification of the Lord's Day, and Inſtruction of the People, every Miniſter ſhall preach twice within his Pariſh every Lord's Day; or elſe ſpend as much time as will be equivalent thereunto, in Inſtructing his Pariſhioners by, either Expoſition of the Scriptures, or Catechizing of Youth; except, by reaſon of the Deficiency of the Maintenance, he be poſſeſſed of two Benefices, lying ſo near together, that he ſupply them both; in which caſe it ſhall be ſufficient to preach once every Lord's Day in either Pariſh; provided that this Injunction do not oblige, where Sickneſs, or any other extraordinary Accident doth prevent it.*

Much depends upon the putting this Article in Execution: For by this means Miniſters will be more ingaged in their Theologick Studies, to the increaſing of that very neceſſary part of Learning among the Clergy. The Lord's Day, a great part of which in many Country-places, is now groſly profaned, will be better ſanctified by the People; who alſo by this means will be better inſtructed in their Duty to God and the King. Frequent Preaching alſo will have a Tendency to keep Men to the practice of their Duty, by keeping up the Spirit of Piety among them. Laſtly, the Miniſtry by this means will grow into Repute; for the Honour of that Profeſſion depends upon frequent and ſerious Preaching.

Prop. 4. *That no more be required to take a Living, than a ſolemn Declaration of our belief of the Truth of the Articles of the Church of* England; *as alſo, an open Declaration that we will conform our ſelves to the Uſage and Cuſtoms of the Church of* England, *as it ſhall be then by Law Eſtabliſhed.*

There are three things deſigned by this Propoſal. The preſerving the Faith of the Church from Corruption, The keeping up the uniform Order of the Church, and the ſatisfying Men of tender Conſciences. As it is neceſſary that the Faith of the Church ſhould be preſerved free from every Corruption, ſo I believe the ſolemn Declaration of our belief of the things mentioned in the former part

part of this Article, will effectually ſecure it from all Attempts of Deceivers to deprave it; and yet leave Men to a due Liberty of Thought as to ſome ſpeculative Matters, in which ſeveral learned and pious Men may be of different Opinions. Such a ſolemn Declaration of our belief of the Truth of the Articles of the Church of *England*, will alſo prevent the Prevarication, and detect the Hypocriſie of thoſe Perſons, who now ſubſcribe them indeed, but not as Articles of Faith, but Articles of Peace. I confeſs, thoſe who can thus prevaricate, have found out a way to evade the Force of any Law that can be made; and to keep their Livings let what Changes will come, even tho' Popery it ſelf ſhould (which God prevent) get the aſcendency among us: For according to the Sentiments of theſe Gentlemen, we may ſubſcribe to any thing whatever, how contrary to Truth ſoever it may be. It is neceſſary that the Hypocriſie of theſe Perſons ſhould be detected, which can be by no other way, than by being required to profeſs their belief of the things they ſubſcribe to: This will quite overturn that Diſtinction made uſe of by Men, who are reſolved to do any thing but part with their Livings. The latter part of this Article is deſigned to preſerve the Order of the Church, and yet give Eaſe to the tender Conſciences of ſome Men; who, tho' they may think the uſe of the things required by the Book of *Common-Prayer* lawful, yet cannot declare their Aſſent and Conſent to every thing contained in, and preſcribed by that

Book. The things to which we are required, by the Act of Uniformity, to give our Assent and Consent, may be considered, either as matters of Faith, or as matters of Practice. If we consider them as matters of Faith, a solemn Declaration of our Assent and Consent to all and every thing contained in, and prescribed by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, is a Declaration that we do believe, that all the Things and Expressions, even every Proposition and Word, in that Book, are true, and agreeable to the Word of God; and that we do believe that there is nothing contain'd in that Book, either as to the Matter exprest, or the manner of Expression, false, or disagreeable to the Form of sound Words. This, some think, is such an Acknowledgment, as seems to equal the Authority of that Book, with the Authority of the *Bible*; and which therefore any Man, which has a due regard to the Authority of those Divine Writings, would be very loath to make of any Book, but the *Bible*. Neither can any Man, I think, safely give his Assent and Consent to all and every thing contain'd in the Book of *Common-Prayer* in this Sence, who is not intirely satisfied of the Truth of every thing, even of every Expression contain'd in that Book. If we consider the things to which we are required by the Act of Uniformity to give our Assent and Consent, as matters of Practice only; then the Declaration of our Assent and Consent to all and every thing contain'd in, and prescrib'd by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, is no more than a solemn Obligation of our

selves

ſelves to comply with, and conform to the Cuſtoms of the Church, by uſing the things required to be uſed by her Members in that Book. This, and no more, ſeems to be the Deſign of the Aſſent and Conſent to all and every thing contained in, and preſcribed by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, required by the Act of Uniformity: For that the Declaration there mentioned, had a reſpect to the things contain'd in the Book of *Common-Prayer*, as matters of Practice, and not as matters of Faith, will evidently appear to every one, that conſiders the Diſtinction between Articles of Faith, and Matters of Practice, made uſe of throughout that Law; as alſo, that the Declaration there mentioned, is by that Law applied, not to the belief of every Word and Propoſition, but to the Uſe of the things preſcribed, in the publick Service of the Church. To this the Declaration it ſelf is limited in that Act, as appears by the Paragraph immediately going before the Declaration it ſelf, the words whereof are theſe: *And to the end, that Uniformity in the Publick Worſhip of God (which is ſo much deſired) may be ſpeedily effected, Be it further enacted by the Authority aforeſaid, That every Parſon, Vicar, or other Miniſter whatſoever, who now hath and enjoyeth any Eccleſiaſtical Benefice or Promotion within this Realm of* England, *or Places aforeſaid, ſhall in the Church, Chappel, or place of publick Worſhip belonging to the ſaid Benefice or Promotion, upon ſome Lord's-day before the Feaſt of Saint* Bartholomew, *which ſhall be in the Year of our Lord God one thouſand ſix hundred and*

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ſixty two, openly, publickly and ſolemnly read the Morning and Evening Prayer, appointed to be read by and according to the ſaid Book of Common-Prayer, at the times thereby appointed; and after ſuch reading thereof, ſhall openly and publickly, before the Congregation there aſſembled, declare his unfeigned Aſſent and Conſent to the uſe of all things in the ſaid Book contained and preſcribed in theſe words, and no other: And then follows the Declaration it ſelf. And afterwards the Law making mention of Lecturers, and requiring them alſo to make the ſame Declaration, doth evidently diſtinguiſh between our Aſſent unto, and Approbation of the Book of *Common-Prayer*, as it is in general a publick Form of Worſhip, and our particular Conſent to uſe all things contain'd thereby. It is evident therefore, that, tho' words were made uſe of in that Declaration, which many did believe to import the Truth of every individual Word and Rite contained in that Book, and who therefore for that Reaſon could not make it in thoſe words, which were by the Law injoined; yet the Deſign of the Law was no more, but to enforce the Practice of the things contain'd in that Book. And if the words of the Declaration themſelves, in their own Significancy, had been as much limited to the uſe of the Prayers and Rites of the Liturgy, as the Law did limit the Declaration, there had not ſo many left the Communion of the Church on that account, as did. There were then, and are ſtill, many who would comply with the uſe of many things, which they cannot

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Aſſent to as a matter of Faith: For a Man may promiſe to uſe whatever he believes to be lawful, whereas he cannot Aſſent to any thing as an Article of Faith, but what he is ſatisfied in his own Mind is contained either directly or by conſequence in the Scriptures, which are the compleat Rule of Faith. I could wiſh therefore, that inſtead of the Declaration required to be made by that Act, that this or the like were required.

I A. B. *do promiſe and ingage in the preſence of God and this Congregation, that I will comply with the Uſe of thoſe things contained in, and preſcribed by, the Book of Common-Prayer and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments*, &c.

By this Declaration the Deſign and Intent of the Act of Uniformity would be fully anſwered, and the Conſciences of Men would not be enſnared. This would preſerve and ſecure the Uniformity of the Worſhip of the Church, and yet would let into her Communion thoſe, who would willingly comply with the Uſe of many things, which they cannot give their Aſſent unto as matters of Faith; who therefore do now refuſe to make that Declaration, becauſe they do believe the words thereof do import more than an Obligation to uſe the things required by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, and conſequently more than they were intended for by the Act of Uniformity.

Prop. 5. *That a certain Number of Divines, who ſhall be impowred to call in ſuch of the Diſſenters, to adviſe with, as they ſhall think fit,*

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be authorized by Commission to review the Book of Common-Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments; and to make such Alterations therein, as may clear the Sense, where doubtful, and give Satisfaction to tender Consciences.

It must be confest, that frequent and unnecessary Alterations in the publick Forms of Worship, are neither desirable nor expedient, and tends very much to make Mens Minds unsettled and wavering; but yet it doth not follow, that all Alterations are unreasonable or unlawful. In some Cases it is unreasonable to deny them, for sometimes there is a necessity for them. Words frequently change their Signification, and Men their Customs; many things that have long lain in Obscurity, are at last discovered. And as it is in this respect with other things, so also is it with many lesser Truths: We, who stand upon as it were the Shoulders of our Forefathers, do see farther than they could. These things frequently render it necessary to alter many things in the publick Offices of the Church, as often as either words change their Signification, or Men their Customs; as often, as by the increase of Knowledge, those Truths, which have hitherto lain hid in Obscurity, by Men of Learning and Piety are better and more clearly understood. As therefore (they are the words of a great Man, but a little transposed) all Men ought on the one hand to avoid the Imputation of a Desultory Levity, as tho' they loved Changes for change sake; so on the other hand we must avoid

avoid a ſullen adhering to things becauſe they were once ſettled, as if Points of Honour were to be maintained here; and that it look'd like a reproaching a Conſtitution, or the Wiſdom of a former Age, to alter what they did: Since it is certain, that what was wiſely ordered at one time, may be as wiſely changed in another. There have been ſeveral Alterations made already in the publick Service of the Church ſince the Reformation, and why therefore may it not be lawful to alter a few things now? Is there nothing in it fit to be conſidered? Are there no Expreſſions in it doubtful, the Sence whereof it is fit ſhould be cleared up? Many things might be offered out of the Liturgy as worthy of Conſideration, becauſe they are now made the Subject of Debate; but we would not preſume to dictate to our Superiours, and therefore refer our ſelves to them to conſider and determine what is fit to be altered in it.

Prop. 6. *That the Croſs in Baptiſm be left indifferent as to its Uſe, ſo that it ſhall be left at every Miniſter's Liberty to uſe it, or not, according as he ſhall judge it lawful, or not, in his own Mind.*

There are many, who look upon the Sign of the Croſs no more than an honourable Badge of their Profeſſion; whereby Perſons baptized are put in remembrance of Chriſt dying upon the Croſs, and of their own Duty in taking up Chriſt's Croſs by following and obeying him, which Duty they think may

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be indifferently expreſſed either by Words or Actions: Theſe think it not Eſſential to the Ordinance of Baptiſm, much leſs do they look upon it as any Sacramental Sign, or as any Similitude or Image forbidden by the Second Commandment: If they did believe, that it did in the leaſt contradict the Divine Precept, they would upon no account uſe it: They at moſt look upon it no more than a Rite and Ceremony convenient to be retained in that part of Divine Worſhip, wherein Perſons are dedicated to the Service of a Crucified Chriſt, to put them in mind, that they ought not to be aſhamed of his Croſs to whoſe Service they are devoted. There are others, who have quite different Apprehenſions of the Croſs; Theſe look upon it as a Ceremony, that has been very much abuſed by the Church of *Rome*, whoſe profeſſed Doctrine it is to worſhip all Croſſes, by which they are direct Idolaters; and that therefore, tho' the abuſe of a thing be no Argument for its diſuſe, if the thing be uſeful and neceſſary in its own nature; it is very convenient, to prevent the like abuſe of it by us, wholly to lay it aſide, eſpecially the Minds of Men being ſo inclin'd as they are to Superſtition. They further look upon it as an Addition to Baptiſm, and that therefore it looks very like a Sacramental Action; for which reaſon they judge the uſe of it not juſtifiable. And that which makes them the more averſe to the uſe of it, is this, They think that it interferes with the Obligation of the Second Commandment; They judge it to be, tho' not a fixed, yet a tranſcient Image;

for

for that it is a Repreſentation of the Croſs of Chriſt, which is of the very Eſſence of an Image. Theſe think that the Uſe, or even the making, not only Graven Images, but the likeneſs of any thing in Heaven or Earth, and the introducing it into any part of the Divine Worſhip, is contrary to the Obligations of that Precept; and that therefore the Sign of the Croſs being at leaſt the Repreſentation of Chriſt Crucified, the Uſe of it in any part of Religious Worſhip, to ſpeak the moſt favourably they can of it, doth not appear to them to be lawful. To all this, on the other hand, the Church-men make this further Reply, That tho' the Papiſts Idolatrouſly worſhip Material Croſſes, yet never the Sign of the Croſs; and as to their ſuperſtitious Uſes of this Sign, which were many, they are not only declared againſt, but carefully rooted out of the Minds of Men. They further ſay, That nothing proper to a Sacrament is aſcribed thereunto; for it is not pretended to be any Sign from God to Man, or that any Promiſe of Grace is annexed thereunto; neither is it pretended to be a means of receiving Grace from God, nor is there any Efficacy aſcribed thereunto; much leſs is it by them ſuppoſed to be any Seal or Pledge from God, to aſſure the Soul of Grace received. They are alſo aſſured it can be no Image, becauſe they are aſſured it is no proper Act of Worſhip at all, it being a Sign from Man to Man, and not from Man to God (as yet many other lawful Ceremonies are, ſuch as Kneeling, Bowing, lifting up the Hands and Eyes) in

which

which the Minister doth declare to the Congregation, what is hereafter expected from the Baptized Person; and that therefore it is not so much an Image, as Letters and Written Words; much less is it as much an Image, as was the Altar erected by the Ten Tribes and a half, to witness their part in the God of *Israel*. I do not pretend to determine who, of these, are in the right. It is confest, the use of it is very ancient, we have Evidences that it was used by many of the Primitive Fathers, the Memorial of whose Piety is now very grateful to pious Christians; but it must be acknowledged also, that even those holy Men used some mixtures of Superstition with it. It must be also considered, that it has been grossly abused by the Papists, and a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence to many serious Christians ever since the Reformation, and still continues to be so. Many, who have freer Thoughts of it than others, may lawfully use it; but those, it is certain, cannot, whose Thoughts are straitned and bound up about it: For if I believe a thing to be unlawful, and yet use it, I sin against my own Conscience, in doing that I am perswaded in my own Mind is contrary to the Law of God. To prevent therefore all Disputes about it, it is proposed, that it be left free to every Man to use, or disuse it. And to prevent any Imposition on any side, If the Parent desire the use of it, and the Minister refuse it; or if the Parent scruple the use of it, and the Minister thinks it convenient to do it; That in case of such Disagreement

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ment between a Minister and his Parishioner about this matter, the Parent shall apply himself to any neighbouring Minister to perform that Ordinance for his Child. By this means every Man will be left to a freedom of Thought within himself, and may acquiesce in his own Practice.

Prop. 7. *That it be left to the Liberty of the Parent, whether he will provide any Sureties at his Child's Baptism, or no; provided, nevertheless, that where there are no Sureties, the Parent, or next immediate Relation of the Child, be present to give an account of his Faith, and to be informed of his Duty in relation to the Child at the time of its Baptism.*

The Use of Godfathers is indeed very ancient: And if we look upon them as Collateral Securities, which, together with the Parent, the Church requires for the bringing up of the Child in the Christian Faith, the Institution doth abundantly bespeak the Church's Care for the Souls of her Members. I cannot therefore see where the Fault of this Institution lies, but that in Times when, and Places especially where the Spirit of Persecution reigns, it is very useful; tho' blessed be God, by reason of the Peace of our *Israel*, and the universal Profession of Christianity among us, they are not so absolutely necessary at this day. Whereas therefore, by reason of the Religious Differences which have for a long time reigned among us, many Persons, otherwise serious and pious, have received

ceived invincible Prejudices againſt them; to which it muſt be acknowledged the groſs Abuſe of the Inſtitution, by the Neglect of thoſe who have undertaken that Office, without ever regarding the Performance of the Duties of it, has very much contributed; it is therefore propoſed, That for the ſake of Peace, the Weakneſs of our Brethren in this reſpect ſhould be paſſed by, and that they ſhould not be required to provide any Sureties, if they themſelves will engage to the Church, that their Children ſhall be trained up in the Chriſtian Faith. It is alſo to be wiſhed, that to prevent Prejudices for the future againſt them, That all Miniſters were required by their reſpective Ordinaries, to admit of none for Godfathers or Godmothers, but ſuch as are qualified, according to what is required in the 29th Canon.

Prop. 8. *That no Miniſters be obliged to refuſe the Lord's Supper to any, of whoſe Fitneſs (both in reſpect of the Knowledge and Practice of Religion) for that Ordinance they are ſatisfied, only becauſe they ſcruple to receive it kneeling.*

It is confeſſed, the Church of *England*, by the cautionary Rubrick added at the End of the Communion, have given ſuch a fair Account of this Poſture, and have ſo fully vindicated themſelves from any ſuſpicions of favouring the Romiſh Idolatry, that no Man has any juſt and reaſonable Ground to refuſe to receive it in that poſture. But yet ſeeing ſome very pious Perſons are prejudiced againſt it,

it, as favouring the Superſtition of the Papiſts; and that it is evident from Antiquity that Kneeling at the Supper was not then in uſe; as alſo that the Sitting poſture, it is poſſible, if all Things are conſidered, may agree very well with the nature of the Inſtitution, it is but reaſonable our weak Brethren ſhould be born with in this matter; and that Miniſters may be left to ſuch a freedom, that they may not be obliged to refuſe any that Ordinance, barely upon the account of the poſture uſed in receiving it. And now I am ſpeaking of this Head, I wiſh it might be conſidered, whether the Reaſon made uſe of by Biſhop *Ridley* in his Viſitation *An. Dom.* 1550. for the Lord's Board being made every where within his Dioceſe after the faſhion of a Table, and not of an Altar, may not be as cogent now as it was then; and whether or no ſome uniform Order throughout the Kingdom, as to this matter, may not hinder and prevent many Differences, which are now apt to ariſe upon this account between Miniſters and their Pariſhioners, whereby the Succeſs of the Goſpel is very much hindred and obſtructed.

Prop. 9. *That the Surplice be either taken away, or at leaſt the Uſe of it left indifferent.*

Tho' Charity ſhould oblige all Men to believe, that the firſt Deſign of enjoining that Garment to be worn by thoſe who are in Orders, at the time of their officiating, was innocent; and that no more was intended thereby, but to put Miniſters in mind of that

purity of Heart with which they ought at all times to draw nigh unto God, but more especially in his own House; yet because it is a Garment, the singularity of which gives great Offence to many serious and pious Christians, who do not only think it decent, but necessary, that those who are separated from the World to the Service of God, should be distinguished from others by a grave Habit, agreeable to their Function; it were to be wished, that the Use of it were either abolished, or left indifferent. These think it lawful for the Magistrate to enjoin what Habit he sees convenient for their constant Wear; but yet they cannot think it necessary, lawful, or convenient, for any to appoint any special and distinct Habit to be worn by Ministers at the time of their officiating in Holy Things only, and not at other times also. Neither can they see any Reason, why that, or any other Garment, should be appropriated to one part of the Service, and not another: They think that this looks like making of holy Garments, and as tho' the Garments did recommend the Worship unto God; which they cannot but look upon as an Error, injurious to the Honour of Almighty God, as tho' He regarded the Vestments in which he was worshipped, more than the Worship it self; and pernicious to the Souls of Men, as tending to encourage them to trust more to the Priest's Garments for Acceptance, than to the Intercession of Christ, or the preparation of their own Hearts. It is not my Business to engage in this Quarrel, by determining whether they

they are in the right or no: for ſuppoſing they are in the wrong, which perchance they may be; yet ſeeing the Matter is of ſo ſmall moment in the Church's account, and ſo offenſive to many ſerious Chriſtians, it is unreaſonable to make it a matter of Contention any longer. To prevent which, it is propoſed, that the Uſe thereof be either wholly laid aſide, or at leaſt left indifferent in all Pariſh Churches.

Prop. 10. *Whereas it is a Diſpute, Whether an Ordination to the Office and Work of the Miniſtry by Presbyters only, without the Concurrence of the Biſhop, be not valid; and, on the other Hand, certain, that it is not Regular, according to the preſent Diſcipline of the Church of* England: *To avoid all Contention therefore about this matter, and that the Church of* England *may evidence her Zeal for Union, and the Veneration ſhe has for the Reformed Churches abroad, whoſe Miniſters are ordained by Presbyters only, and yet maintain her own Authority and Order in the Adminiſtration of her own Diſcipline, this Medium is propoſed; That whereas, in the Ordination of Prieſts in the Church of* England, *Thoſe to be ordained are not only by Prayer and Impoſition of the Biſhops and Prieſts Hands ſolemnly conſecrated unto, and inveſted with the Order of Prieſthood, in thoſe Words,* Receive the Holy Ghoſt, *&c. but are alſo by the delivery of a* Bible *unto them particularly authoriz'd to execute that Office in that particular Congregation, to which they are lawfully appointed, in thoſe Words,* Take thou Autho-

rity to preach the Word, &c. *By which latter Action and Words the Perſon ordained is not inveſted with the Office of a Presbyter, which was done by the former Rite and Words; but is only authorized legally to do the Work of his Office in that Pariſh, where the Providence of God doth place him: It is propoſed, That all ſuch Perſons, who have been ordained by Faſting and Prayer, with the Impoſition of the Hands of Preſbyters only, and who have Teſtimonials of ſuch their Ordination, as alſo of their pious and peaceable Lives and Converſations, ſhall not be obliged in the former manner, and by the former words, to ſubmit to a Re-ordination to the Office and Work of the Miniſtry in general; but ſhall be, by the laying on of the Hands of the Biſhop only, in the latter manner and words, only authorized to exerciſe their Miniſtry in that Place and Church to which they are called; and that by vertue of this their legal Admiſſion to the Work of the Miniſtry in this manner, they ſhall be as fully inabled to accept of and poſſeſs any Eccleſiaſtical Benefice and Promotion in the Church, either with, or without the Cure of Souls, as tho' they had been ordained in the uſual way and manner. It is alſo further propoſed, that (whereas Ordination by the Biſhop and his Presbyters, is the Regular way of Admiſſion to the Office of the Miniſtry in the Church of* England) *to preſerve her Order and Diſcipline intire and inviolable, tho' this Indulgence be (for the promoting an Union among Proteſtants) granted to thoſe already ordained by Presbyters only; yet it ſhall extend no further, that ſo her Order may be preſerved for the future; and Diſorder,*

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and the Contempt of her Authority may be prevented.

This Propoſal, as it is of the greateſt Length, ſo alſo is it of the greateſt Import and Concern. The matter of Ordination being the greateſt Difficulty to be ſurmounted in effecting an Union betwixt all reaſona- and peaceable Proteſtants: This is that which thoſe of both ſides are moſt zealous about. The Church-men plead, That the Ordination of the Diſſenters is done in a Schiſm, and without any lawful Authority, in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed Order of the National Church; and that it is done without the Conſent and Concurrence of the Biſhop, who in the *Engliſh* Church has the chief Juriſdiction in Eccleſiaſtical Affairs, without whoſe Concurrence therefore Ordination which is an Act of Juriſdiction, cannot be done: That therefore the Ordination received from the hands of the Diſſenters, as null in it ſelf, and contrary to the eſtabliſhed Order and Government of the Church of *England*, ought to be reiterated and renewed. The Diſſenters, on the other hand, plead, That ſuppoſing they were ordained in a Schiſm, that yet their Ordination is valid and good, being done by the Presbytery, or thoſe who execute the Office of Presbyters, in that way which is required by the Scriptures, *viz.* by Faſting, Prayer, and Impoſition of Hands. That therefore there is the ſame reaſon for the re-baptizing of thoſe who are not baptized by thoſe of the Church of *England*,

which yet they do not allow of, as there is for re-ordaining those who are not ordained by the Church-men. They argue farther, That many of the Reformed Churches abroad ordain their Ministers by the same Church Officers, as the Dissenters do in *England*; and that therefore if our Ordination here in *England* be null, theirs also must be null; and by consequence they can have no Ordinances, and are no Churches, as having no Ministers, who are an integral part of the visible Church. That therefore tho' (if the Consequence of the Action reached no farther than themselves) they might for Peace-sake submit to be re-ordained; yet they can never be induced to do that, which is in effect to un-church so great a part of the Reformation, and which must of necessity put a Weapon into the hands of the Papists against them; for which Reasons, tho' they would do what lies in them for the promoting the Peace and Welfare of our *English Israel*, they cannot submit to be re-ordained. These are the Arguings of either Side. And after all that can be said, it must be confessed to be a nice point, and that on either Side there are Difficulties not to be surmounted, but by Men of an extensive Charity. It must be confessed, That there is great strength in the Arguments on either side. The Arguments of the Dissenters are such, that it will be a difficult matter for any to condemn their Ministry as a Nullity, without condemning the Ministry of many parts of the Reformation beyond the Seas as a Nullity also. There

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is, on the other hand, ſo much Force and Strength in the Arguments made uſe of by the Church-men, as do manifeſt and ſhew, that if the Miniſtry of the Diſſenters is not a Nullity in it ſelf, that yet their Admiſſion to it was irregular, as contrary to the Order and Diſcipline of the Church of *England*. The only way therefore, if this Difference be ever compoſed, of doing it, will be by pitching upon ſuch a *Medium*, whereby a due Veneration for the Miniſtry of the Reformed Churches abroad may be manifeſted, and a ſtrict regard may be had to the Honour and Order of the *Engliſh* Church; whereby the Objections of either Party may be anſwered, and the Scruples of reaſonable Men ſatisfied. This (with the greateſt Submiſſion to thoſe who ſhall think otherwiſe) I believe the Medium offer'd in this Propoſal would do: For by this *Medium* there is abundant Care taken, on the one Hand, to ſatisfie the Diſſenters; and, on the other Hand, to maintain the Authority and Order of the Church of *England*; and on both Hands, to manifeſt the reſpect we in *England* have for all the Reformed Churches abroad, whether their Miniſters are ordained by Biſhops or Presbyters. There is ſuch a Mixture of Submiſſion to the Church on the Diſſenters part, and of Clemency and Condeſcenſion on the Churches part; that I can ſee no reaſon, why any on either ſide ſhould ſtand out any longer upon this account. By this *Medium*, Care is taken to preſerve the Authority and Order of the Church inviolable, and free from Contempt; and yet room left for a perfect and compleat freedom of Thought

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as to every Man's private Sentiments of this Matter. I shall only add this further, That if any shall think that a Schism doth nullify Orders, and that therefore the Orders of the Dissenters must necessarily be a Nullity, and their Ministers for that Reason no more than Lay Persons; To these I shall propose the Charity of the *Romish* Church (whose Charity we all know is not very great) for an Example; She has always, in her cool Thoughts, judged otherwise than these Gentlemen dô: For it is the Judgment of that Church, That Schism is no Bar to the Validity of any Person's Orders; and therefore in the Days of Queen *Mary*, they did not Re-ordain those, who had been ordained before in the Days of her Father and Brother, tho' those Days were esteemed by that Church a Time of Schism; but did only supply what was wanting in their Ordination, by the Addition of those *Romish* Rites, which were omitted by the Reformers. And to this Day they do not ordain those again, who are ordained in the *Greek* Communion, tho' they judge them to be as much Schismaticks as the Protestants are. And therefore I would hope, that the Church of *England* has as much Charity for the *English* Dissenters, as the *Romish* Church has for those who dissent from her. But if these should think, that the Reason why the Papists did not reject Ordination, tho' done in a Schism, was because they looked upon it as a Sacrament; they would do well to consider, that we have abundantly more Ancient Testimonies of the Churches Practice in this respect. A Learned Divine of the *English* Church [who, tho'

tho' not of the first Rank, yet is numbred among her Dignitaries] assures us, that the Antient Church made a great difference between those ordained by Hereticks, and those ordained by Schismaticks only. Of which he gives us this memorable Instance, That *Melitius* an *Egyptian* Bishop having Schismatically ordained several Persons, the Synod then convened at *Nice* determined, that in regard *Melitius* was no Heretick, but only a Schismatick, the Orders of those ordained by him should not be declared Null; but that being confirmed by *Alexander* their proper Metropolitan, they should be admitted to Communion, and the Exercise of their several Ministries. This was long before that Conceit, of Orders being a Sacrament, was thought on.

Prop. 11. *That the Power of the Keys be so intirely put into the Hands of the Clergy, that no Layman be permitted to exercise any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, by Censures, Suspensions, or Excommunications; but that in all those Instances, wherein the Church is permitted to exercise her Power by the Laws, it be performed and executed by Spiritual Persons. It is further proposed, that there be none suffered to commute by buying off the Penalty, in such Cases and Crimes where Publick Penance ought to be done; because such Commutations are prejudicial, and a very great Discouragement to a Reformation of Manners.*

It has, and doth still continue to be a very great Eye-sore in the Eyes of many high Churchmen, that so great a part of the Power of the Keys is lodged in the Hands of the Ecclesiastical Courts,

Courts, which moſtly conſiſt of Lay-men. This they cannot but look upon as a very great Burthen: For tho' they judge, that the Civil State may determine in what Caſes the Church ſhall exert her Power; yet they judge that the Power ſhe is allowed to exert, ought to be exercis'd by Spiritual Perſons, to whom that Power ſeems to be in a ſpecial manner committed in the Goſpel. They therefore wiſh that Excommunication, which is the moſt ſolemn Act of Diſcipline in the Church, might never be denounced againſt any, but for very urgent Reaſons, *viz.* For the obſtinate denyal of ſome important Article of the Chriſtian Religion, or the wilful perſiſting in any notoriouſly ſcandalous Practice, after due Exhortation to the contrary. And as they wiſh it might never be pronounced but for very urgent Reaſons, ſo alſo that it might be the laſt Remedy the Church makes uſe of; and that when-ever it is uſed, that it be done in a very ſolemn manner, and attended with Prayer and Faſting for the Offender's reclaiming. And if theſe things were obſerved, I doubt not, but that the Spiritual Weapons of the Church, which are now deſpiſed by the Prophane, to which their too common uſe has not a little contributed, would again grow terrible to Offenders. The latter part of this Propoſal is abſolutely neceſſary, to prevent the ſenſible growth of open Wickedneſs.

Prop. 12. *It is propoſed, That in Caſes of Scandal and Impiety committed by Miniſters, the Biſhop, with the Clergy of the Deanry, where the Offence is charged upon the accuſed Perſon to be committed,*

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shall try and determine of all such Accusations; and upon proof of any scandalous and impious Practices, committed by any Clergy-man contrary to the Canons, and unbecoming his Ministry, the Bishop shall have full Power to suspend ex Beneficio & Officio *every such Minister; as also to order the Profits of every such Living to be applyed for the Payment of another to supply the place, until such time as the offending Minister shall in the Presence of four Ministers acknowledge his fault to the Bishop, and premise amendment of Life for the future. It is also proposed, That to this purpose the Bishop shall yearly visit his Clergy in every Deanry, to inquire into, and determine all things of this nature. It is also further proposed, That for the Bishop's better Information, as to the Lives of the Clergy within his Diocess, the Bishop shall appoint one or more sober and grave Clergy-men in every Deanry, whose Office it shall be to receive all Informations or Presentments, which shall by any within the Deanry be made against their Ministers; and if the Matter be against any of the Canons, to bind over the Accusers to make good, and the Accused to answer the Charge alledged against him, to the Bishop at his Annual Visitation.*

This whole Proposition is designed for the preventing Immorality in the Clergy, than which there is nothing more prejudicial to Religion. Examples are of more force than Precepts. And tho' a Man talk like an Angel of Light in the Pulpit; yet if out of it he behaves himself like a Fiend of Hell, it cannot be expected that his Preaching should have any great Influence upon the Lives of his Hearers. It must

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be owned, that there are very many excellent Men and Miniſters, who are the Ornaments of our Church; but yet there are many alſo, who by Drunkenneſs, and other enormous Crimes, are the ſhame of their Function. The Impunity of theſe is both a Diſparagement, and a Detriment to the Church. It is therefore neceſſary, that ſuch care ſhould be taken to puniſh the Immoralities which abound among the Clergy, that may make them watchful over their own Lives. I doubt not but the R. R. Biſhops would, if they knew who they were, ſeverely puniſh them; but the Largeneſs of their Dioceſes renders it impoſſible for them to have a perſonal knowledge of their Clergies Behaviour: And therefore it is neceſſary, that ſome Means ſhould be afforded them, whereby they may receive ſome Aſſiſtance in the Government of the Churches committed to their Care in this reſpect. It is true, this Matter is now intruſted with the Eccleſiaſtical Courts; but their Intereſt lies ſo much to connive at theſe things, that it is found by Experience to be to no purpoſe to complain of any thing in that Court; for a little Money will ſtifle the matter, tho' it be never ſo hainous and wicked. It is therefore but reaſonable, that for the more effectual puniſhment of Vice in the Clergy, ſome may be in all parts of the Dioceſs appointed by the Biſhop to be his Aſſiſtants in inſpecting the Manners of the Clergy; who by their pious and Exemplary Lives may ſet a good Example to the Neighbouring Clergy, and who by their Preſence and Authority may overaw the Vitious.

Prop. 13. *It is propoſed, That thoſe, who have at preſent Meetings, and ſhall comply with the Terms propoſed, ſhall be ſuffered to continue in the Pariſhes where they are, to preach as Lecturers, at the charge of their Hearers, until ſuch time as they may be otherwiſe provided for.*

This is not deſigned to be any Prejudice to the Parochial Rights of any Incumbent, where at preſent there is a Meeting of Diſſenters; but only to provide for the Support of thoſe, whoſe peaceable Diſpoſitions ſhall incline them to Conform, until they ſhall be provided for by ſome ſettled Cure in the Church.

Prop. 14. *It is Laſtly propoſed, That thoſe, who cannot out of Conſcience comply with the Terms propoſed, but yet do profeſs the belief of the Chriſtian Faith contained in the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of* England, *ſhould enjoy the Benefit of the preſent Act of Toleration, with this Proviſo, That their Preachers follow no other Employ, but their Preaching or Teaching. It is further propoſed, That none be any more tolerated, who are either Papiſts, or deny the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of* England.

The Deſign of this Propoſal, is to find out ſuch an Expedient, that the Church may not lie under the Imputation of perſecuting her weak Brethren, and yet may preſerve her Doctrine and Diſcipline free from groſs Corruptions. It is impoſſible, that all thoſe who profeſs the Chriſtian Faith, ſhould be in all things of the ſame Mind; we may as ſoon expect, that

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all Men should have the same Physiognomy and Countenance, as their, and therefore, though it be necessary, that notorious Depravers of our Faith, and such who cause wilful and unnecessary Divisions in the Church, should be censured according to the Nature of their Crimes; yet it is also necessary, that those who are weak in the Faith, and differ from us in no substantial Point of Religion, but only in some lesser Matters, should be born and dealt with according to that Tenderness, which our Redeemer himself has manifested towards the Souls of Men. The Restrictions added to these Proposals, are designed to prevent the growth of Anabaptistry and Quakerism; the one whereof, by putting up every Tradesman, who is so conceited of himself, as to believe himself able to be a Preacher, into the Pulpit, is endeavouring to supplant and undermine the very Order of the Ministry: The other, by dissembling with God and Man, is endeavouring to deprave the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

Thus have I faithfully proposed what I think is both necessary, and will very much contribute to the healing of our Breaches: And, *I pray God incline the Hearts of those, in whose Power it is to compose our Differences, to do those things which may make for Peace.*

FINIS.